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# THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM



*The*  
PASSIONATE PILGRIM

*or*  
EROS *and* ANTEROS

*by*  
FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE

Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta  
Più caramente—

*With an Introduction*

*by*  
R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON

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## NOTE

THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM, or Eros and Anteros, was published in 1858, when Palgrave was a young man of thirty-four, over the pseudonym Henry J. Thurstan. I have had the privilege of talking over the relation of certain narrative statements therein to the actual facts, with his daughter, Miss Palgrave, who has kindly allowed me to write of these matters, on her authority. All is said here, therefore, that needs to be said, or ever will be. Indeed, there is no more to say.

R. B. J.



## INTRODUCTION

FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE was a poet, above all a lover of poetry, who made poems out of life.

*The Passionate Pilgrim* is, emotionally, a literal 'Confession'; but so far as it attempts narration, almost wholly imaginative: 'a sincere *Liber Amoris*, to eternalize in true words 'a tale of 'things, trivial in the world's ear, terrible in recollection'; not precisely a true tale.

Because the happy, intimate boy and girl friendship, unbroken for years, developed in him a man's love which his lady Désirée could not return, he sought 'relief in the imagined sympathy of unknown fellow-creatures, the sad solace that lies in utterance of agonies and exultations,' not 'merely personal,' but 'one image of the fate of humanity':—

'It is not the facts, but the glory of their investing sensations I wish to narrate.'

It may well be that he was actually at her side, 'in the little Gothic crypt of a village church near the sea, and wandering over the roof or touching hands as he aided her blithe ascent to the highest tower'; since 'her wild caprice of gaiety,' ever met, in him, with a normal and healthy 'boy's delight' in the 'banners or battle-cries of school warfaring,' the 'great boisterous school-hall,' or



'the more ambitious games in cricket-field or football.' But it was certainly not, as for such a true 'English lad' it could not be,—on 'that spring afternoon, when two children had first met for an hour's play and laughter,' that the 'miracle' happened, the 'moment's alchemy' which 'transmuted earth to heaven.'

It was but the poet's fancy, enriching recollection, that thus put back to 'the threshold of youth,' the later growth from 'tumultuous boyish affection' to 'the sweet silent secrecy' of unspoken passion.

Nor, in the 'end,' *not*—in fact—'the ruin of life,' was his 'own Désirée another's'; or had the 'lovely little sister who rewarded' him 'with kisses for loving Désirée' been wed; who was, indeed, but a child when (in 1854) these memories were written.

It was for art's sake, careless of facts, that he chose as setting for dear memories of love the 'retired country-house of Tuscany,' 'the chestnut wood above the White Tesoretto,' and 'the walls of a Cæsar's palace'; only because he treasured above all memories the beauties given by God and man to Italian cities, whose streets they had never, in fact, trodden side by side. Since he 'admired so,' reverencing the 'Vita Nuova' as a 'Gospel of Love' he must lead, in fancy, 'Désirée's brave simple spirit' to Valdicampo, 'to thread every waterbreak and attempt all rocks of promising difficulty,' with 'shouts and silver accents of divine and inextinguishable laughter!'

Yet the tragedy, and how it came to be, is plainly told 'in true words.' It was the 'fatal intimacy' of many years, 'the long familiarity which permitted such open intercourse, such equal and unrestrained exchange of

friendship,' the ' confidence that feared no misconstruction, and the happiness which did not need to look beyond the day ' ; it was ' her own perfect unreserve and noble heartiness ' that encouraged in him ' the peculiar blindness and lucid insight of passionate devotion ' ; while rendering her, maybe, ' unconscious what she was to him she met always with unswerving sisterly affection ' : so that he ' feared the bare chance of losing all, or to take his fate into his own hasty hands.'

They had, indeed, ' thoughts shared together from the nursery,' and ' the frank affection, the unabated confidingness of Désirée,' survived even what is here only spoken of as a ' cruel - hearted possibility ' that ' books teach ' — ' the transference of passion to another,' and ' happiness in the after-love which (the experienced assure us) most men find refuge in for life.'

When just upon five years after this book was published, that is in 1862, Francis Palgrave first met the lady destined, in but a few months, to become his wife, who had, curiously enough, long been *her* friend, the intimacy was not disturbed, nor was it broken save by the hand of Death ; proof enough surely, were proof needed, of all he learned from suffering, of the truth behind the poem. For the sad realities of life do not die, though we pass from them into more lasting blessedness—such as he could not guess Fate held for him, when this beautiful dream was woven out of what ' might have been.'

It is a simple tale, ' nothing new in truth to any human creature,' told ' in the most English English ' ; but ' to those who love poetry ' and ' are not happiness-hardened,' it courageously expresses ' a thousand perplexed thoughts

on human life,' faced and illuminated in the light of understanding familiarity with the world's master-thinkers.

The innumerable quotations reveal that inborn thirst for beauty, that deep love for the music in thought and words, that fine taste and eager industry in reading, which had been unconsciously preparing, from childhood's days, the 'classic' *Golden Treasury*; and secured for it the unique position it almost immediately achieved and can never lose.

'Désirée was my Education,' he says; and no doubt in 'that golden time and the first fires of love,' he centred all poets' dreams, philosophies, and aspirations around his thoughts of her. Yet these were fundamentally his own, as they remained with him always, and would have come to him whatever else life might bring. We cannot accept his modest claim to be 'more editor than author' of this lover's 'Pilgrimage'; but, quite apart from all its personal emotion, it indeed is a 'treasure' of poetic 'gold.' To him, always, 'these writers hardly suggested books, they were living presences.'

There is, probably, only one opinion, or rather attitude towards others, expressed here, which a wider knowledge and understanding of men prompted him to regret. More than once he allows himself to utter, or at least lightly record, 'English jest and gay laughter' at some painted and bedecked holy figure in a wayside shrine, as one scorning the childish 'delusions' and 'credulous' superstitions that compose the Lives of the Saints, when he 'could see no choice between blasphemous piety and cataleptic idiocy.'

Had he contemplated a reissue of this Confession, he would have wished, we know, to retract and apologize for

such unkindly arrogance ; since, though never actually subscribing to Papal dogmas, he learned a deep respect for every form of Romanist faith, and would earnestly deplore, and frown on, any slighting reference to even the most naïve or most startling ' miracle ' of modern times.

For the rest, his ' courageous and inquiring spirit ' has given us ' a true picture ' from within ; which ' on a scale of infinite minuteness, involves the central perplexity of the world's riddle,' as it tortures and bewilders a sensitive human soul.

R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON.



# THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

OR

EROS AND ANTEROS.

## BOOK I.

*I My heart was hot within me : the fire kindled : and at the last I spake with my tongue ;—*How have I sinned, that I should thus be punished ? Ignorant of the secrets of this world's governance, dimly knowing myself, confessing error, yet anxious to find the truth,—I cannot, however, in the appeal to remembrance, in the heat of fancy, before the dispassionate assizes of reason, see cause for the infliction of pain so severe that remorse surely has no sharper stings, nor shame more enduringly distressful. He who has smitten knows the cause, and I dare not ask Him the duration. But by the many years' experience I shall here recount, I am assured this regret will not leave me for life : by remembrance of its human origin I cannot wish it effaced hereafter, except on one condition, unrecorded in any vision even of the heaven above the heavens.

Why again should I write of these things, trivial in the world's ear, terrible in my own recollection ? To set forth, and, were it possible, eternalize in true words a tale like mine, is an impulse so strong, it has affected so many

through all ages, that one may justly esteem it based deep in our human nature—an ultimate fact : *the fire burns* ; there is no other answer. Natural too is what such confession often receives, a verdict of vanity or weakness from the strong and the successful ; for wealth cannot understand poverty. Whilst he thinks it harsh and partial, the writer of course anticipates this judgment. Those who from better fortunes, or feelings less sensitive, cannot know the strange relief lying in the imagined sympathy of unknown fellow-creatures, as they read, if they read, will smile or moralize—preach patience or forgetfulness—try tears by the test of utility—turn from the hateful spectacle of pain, and close disgust with derision. Put away the book : ‘ I have nothing recondite to tell, nothing worth looking for ; nothing either unheard of by you, or new in truth to any human creature ’. But all men are not thus happiness-hardened, or will esteem a sincere *Liber Amoris* weak or vain—a mere display of folly or of egotism.

Ove sia chi per prova intenda amore.  
Spero trovar pietà, non chè perdono.

Those, again, not inexperienced themselves in evil will recognize that in this mysterious dispensation of life, suffering seemingly unmerited in degree and endless in severity most defies explanation, and most provokes the search of any courageous and inquiring spirit ; that here, on a scale of infinite minuteness, the central perplexity of the world’s riddle is involved. Far from the writer is it to say—‘ *Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j’ai vus* ’ : even for alleviation’s sake, he would not care to write, were this theme of agonies and exultations merely personal. But

the thoughtful will know that man—the microcosm—repeats each in his individual sphere, one image of the fate of humanity ; that a true picture of the world within by implication comprehends the world without us ; that the experience of each is the lesson of all. They too, lastly, will feel the sad solace that lies in utterance ; why the fire burns, and I must speak ; why this confession tells strangers what has been reserved from friends.

II All suffering, it has been repeated often, destroys or is destroyed. But the latter alternative, in the sense generally meant, appears to me a partial statement. It is a phrase chosen for the purpose of well-intended consolation, and based on the secret faith that Time, who brings so much, never fails also to bring forgetfulness. ‘ You are sad now ’, it seems to say ; ‘ but wait. After a while you also will be as you were—you will have re-entered ‘ on natural happiness ’. And if the speaker be of a religious tone, he checks his smile to add—‘ You will forget. But ‘ you will find reason for thankfulness, not in the relief ‘ granted alone, but in the very remembrance, it may be, of ‘ your sorrow ’.

If this were indeed all, we might adopt at once Voltaire’s too famous apologue into the cycle of Christian morality, and follow philosopher and princess in that devotional offering—‘ Ils firent ériger une belle statue au Temps, ‘ avec cette inscription :

‘ A CELUI QUI CONSOLE ’.

It is indeed so in romances ; not in life. Sorrow, with joy (for this characterizes every passion), if not fatal, is



not destroyed,—it is simply incorporated. ‘Love is love ‘for evermore’. As science tells us that Omnipotence alone can annihilate the most trivial of atoms (if in ultimate truth Omnipotence itself be not here limited), so no man can really put by the past, or separate self from self. That the *vis vivida* of identity varies much in degree, I do not deny; yet the most broken and planless of lives has its own unity. It is the *same* things which are perpetually changing: annihilation is impossible in the spiritual world, as in the material; we are at once, not merely what we are, but what we were, and what we shall be.

I cannot write with art, but only to lighten this pain; to say once more how much I have prized her: although it be indeed too late for mercy, to cry to God once more with Augustine, ‘*Da quod amo; amo enim; et hoc tu dedisti*’. Most who have described the course of love are more careful to narrate the circumstances and crises of passion, than attempt a picture of the words, thoughts, or inner sensations of the passion itself. But if he had the faculty, the narrator would want the wish to compose a romance; to corrupt reality by ornamental fiction or ‘moral purpose’; he can write only ‘the things which he has ‘seen, and the things which are’. Words indeed have their limits; like colours, they are foiled at each extremity, by the sunlight and by the gloom of nature. Yet although without expressions into which I can transfuse the elixir of their sweetness or the wormwood of their despair, I desire, so far as it may be possible, to render in language the feelings that can come but once in life, but which will throughout colour, and may survive it: to paint them with the fewest and plainest words

I can ; in the most English English. I do not even wish to draw the fleeting cloud, only to fix the hues that paled it with death, or crimsoned it into glory. 'A thousand trivialities of common life not altogether omissible—not altogether, as I hope, unpardonable in narration, formed part of these spiritual experiences ; and by the subtle inter-currents of being, passed into the mind, or whatever it may be, which is the silent and sequestered centre of our individuality. A thousand perplexed thoughts on human life, thoughts not novel, but the oldest of the old, and so gifted with perpetual youth, grew with advancing years, menaced often life itself with overshadowing terror, and found in passion a contrasting peace, or a consolatory resolution. Some account, therefore, of mental progress, the steps of study and the teachings of man and nature, is a necessary portion of an undertaking, which will interest none but those—and better for mankind were they the majority—from whom nothing human is alien.

III There is a time in the life of all men so forgotten, that we can hardly call it part of life. 'It is dead', Augustine has observed, 'and we are alive'. We accept our own infancy on the faith of others. It never came within the range of recollection. It lay beyond the sphere of personal identity. The mind of Plato himself or Shakespeare was then, so far as we can imagine, only a thing future and possible. It was a land of darkness where we were, and knew it not, and were unconscious that ourselves had any real existence ; till some accident, the society of other children, or childish prayer, or death in the house, lifted the veil, and our position in this strange earth became partially cognizable. It is often the same

with the earlier days of what is to be the friendship, the passion, the real life of life. We were with angels, and we knew it not : the ' Presence which is not to be put by ' was over us, but our eyes were sealed. Thus there was an interval, how long I cannot remember, during which I knew Désirée, but had not learned the lesson of her name. We must have met ; for the parents on both sides were friends of old standing : but, like the first sunrise seen in infancy, the earlier meetings are forgotten. For what I now recall is that my friendship, as a thing of old and familiarly recognized, was claimed by Désirée, as she rode by a field where I was playing in the thoughtlessness of childhood and ignorance, who might be this bright creature. An impression of the ' *crespe chiome d'or puro lucente* ', of the animated voice, the frank and noble nature, remains : how she welcomed me as a friend ; how she boasted of some recent exploit in riding. Twenty years, alas ! have effaced further remembrance, if any further was in truth left : indeed, I see perhaps with most distinctness, a sapling elm, and the palings that bounded a field where we stood talking. The sun had not seemed to rise brighter that day, nor was the summer evening of more than common beauty.

IV But the birthtime of the new life was now approaching unawares : I was already taking a child's sleep, and dreamless on the threshold of Paradise. Presently the golden doors open—the angel child is within. Yet I have few circumstances to tell of that beatification. It is the *thought* of those past years, as Wordsworth expressed it, for which we feel a benediction dashed with regret. Nature refuses to preserve what was so fugitive—what so little merited

preservation,—as the acts of childhood. In most memories however retentive, three or four scenes alone maintain, or seem to maintain, something of their original vivacity : these rise up when we say, ‘ I recollect everything that ‘ happened when I was a child, but I do not care to trouble ‘ you with those trivialities ’. And even these, perhaps, we see through a mist that enchants and glorifies. I think could we by any Medean magic revive them in their first sunshine, we should most wisely refrain : who can say what that child’s heart would be, when judged by the man’s experience ; brought rudely into the light of common day from the domain and shadow of ‘ tender memory ’ ? Whether we should find in our ancient selves an angel now lost, or the father of the man we know with his shames and errors, the vision could not be the truth of what we were then ; why should we undo that remembrance ? At the best, however fair, it would be yet ‘ another ‘ Yarrow ’.

Indeed I do not doubt the acts of those years partook in the littleness of the actors. But the feelings with which at a few critical moments such circumstances were associated, I do not hold trivial. Their influence has been with me, and with many men, a power for life : be they what they may, ridiculous to the crowd perhaps or unintelligible, they are still the ‘ master light of all my seeing ’. As such, they merit record : or it is at least a diminution of pain, an hour’s pause from the fire and the worm to record them.

V Such influences, however, did not, as already noticed, attend my first years of acquaintance with Désirée : these had not made her the starting-point for the memories of a

new life :—a crisis described with his own mysterious grace by Virgil :

Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala  
(dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem ;  
alter ab undecimo tum *te* jam ceperat annus :  
ut vidi, ut perii ! . . .

I was not many months older when the day came, fated to begin the passion of desire and of reverence which, if individuality pursues us *there*, will attend one soul through eternity. But he cannot realize in words the absolute separation this hour made in the child's life ; the new creation, the birth which seemingly wrought a change greater than that from the first nothingness to human existence ; the trembling, the great delight, the inner music of crowned triumph, ' the peace ' (to quote words of so-familiar sublimity) ' which the world cannot give '. Nor can I describe the early steps in that Eden : ' non so ben ' ridir ', like Dante wandering into the wood where he was to hear tidings of Beatrice, ' com' i' v' entrai '. I suppose this is so with all men. Love, who leads us blindfold, keeps himself the secret of that labyrinth to which he is at once the clue and the perplexity. He says, ' Ask no more : I did it ' : he whispers the warning not to search too curiously ; that his enchantment perhaps gave the freshness to the grass and the glory to the flower, holiness to the shrine, and faith to the pilgrim. There is a special mystery about many beginnings, and none more than this : a veil not wisely lifted : a reverential fear which tells us that faith on some things is more secure than knowledge.

If, in truth, I could retrace the looks, words, and doings of that spring afternoon, they would be nothing : two

children together in a room ; others coming and going ; furniture around and the things of the most every day ; laughter and trivial syllables, bright hair and bright features, and animation, and the golden atmosphere of youth ; childly inconsecutiveness of discourse, perhaps, plans for future meeting suggested and left incomplete even in words ; a gay farewell, quick steps of departure ; and then—— As the angel's medicinal touch at the pools of Bethesda, a moment's alchemy had transmuted earth to heaven. But that this miracle should be narrowed to one—that I had gone down alone into what was in after years to be bitter with a more than Marah bitterness—could I have mistrusted Providence so far as to believe such calamity possible ? Where two children had met for an hour's play and laughter, and no further thought, an old scene and calamity had renewed itself : Ida and Toggenburg : Dante and Beatrice : Eros and Anteros. Alas, what I drank of, was it the ' fountains of God ', or the mocking and illusive waters of Gadara ?

VI Immediately the object of existence was to see this lady, or to muse on her after seeing. Any clear sense of pursuit, of ultimate triumph, I had not : these desires, the first thoughts of later and less ideal passion, presented themselves dimly as yet, matters that roused no paramount interest : the joy of the day was all-sufficient. Thought of Désirée seemed to glorify the simple sense of life into a ' pure organic pleasure ', a delight ' sublime in its senselessness ' : but if seeing her, hearing, sitting by her, at the touch of her hand or dress, I may truly say, I felt love in every limb. . . . One can hardly put these things into words : if I could, I would hope that some few, here and

there, would recognize the truth of the description. My entrance on school life, commenced a few months before, and *then* the main event of my little experience, how trivial did it now appear ! It had seemed, of course, at the time, the beginning of man's estate : now these matters merged themselves in what had suddenly become the dark ages of childhood, the days of which I could willingly have said, that I was as one of the heathen, and ignorant then of heaven. Whilst to others' eyes remaining, no doubt, miserably childish, love at least so far raised me already to more manly thoughts, that I was a separate creature at once from the child, without aims or central and guiding passion : I had no interest in the years when I had not truly known *Désirée*. Henceforth the world was changed, and this great love coloured everything : giving a new life to the studies, which were to make me worthier her : to the games which, at every moment of animation or triumph, seemed to me at once transacted under her eye, where I conquered for her,—or if not, her fancied consolation was the victory : to the first friendships of school, pursued with the greater warmth, because I felt that how much ever I might love friends, it was still with a passion differing in essential nature from that which the burning blush of the soul made me conscious of at the least recollection of *Désirée*. And there is one characteristic of youth which gave a peculiar force and exquisiteness of delight to such recollections.

VII As years advance, and we learn what life is, the common-places of existence strike most men less. We have trodden the daily round so often, that we lose almost the sense of the dust and the monotony : we are at home

in the office; we have learned to like Lombard Street. And then we recognize that it is so with others also. Every day in palace, or counting-house, or cottage, is filled up with a succession of what to the most indolent and independent are nothing less than daily tasks and inevitable. Since this burden of uniform iteration is laid on all, our former envy of those we had once fancied exempt diminishes. We do not perhaps desire wealth less, but we are always more aware of the limitations under which wealth increases happiness : of its narrow power, whilst procuring much, to bestow what to most men is the pleasure of pleasures, novelty :

. . . . versamur ibidem atque insumus usque,  
nec nova vivendo procuditur ulla voluptas.

But in boyhood, unbent as yet to the yoke of custom and credulous of an eternity of change, we were sensitive to the monotonous spaces in life, and felt its commonplaceness with a strange intensity. The mind is nearer Nature then, the taste and senses unconsciously more refined, more instinctively fastidious, than when in later life our faculties have been dulled by iteration of experiences, distracted by a thousand arguments. Many a rough English lad, all animal as he seems to foreign critics, incapable of appreciating our noble public school education, carries with him to that little arena of clamorous warfare a heart almost too delicately alive to the peace of home and its images of female tenderness : and amidst wild games, or during the first intoxicating glimpses of the glorious ancient world unfolded ' like a banner ' before him, thinks of the field and forest he has left as of an imperial palace ; a liberty he



has surrendered. He does not regret the resumption of study, or find no animation in the return to river or football field : it is the repeated and unswerving routine, the something too well known and hackneyed in every circumstance (I put it to readers' recollections), which depresses him.

VIII But how glorious the contrast, to turn in thought from the midst of that narrow circle of Common-place over-familiar, to the image of *Désirée* ! I feel the subtle sweetness of the fancy now, as I recall those days, in what seems at least all its original freshness. Around were the well-known faces of hearty companions, the rough, the out-speaking, the careless contemporaries, the din, the shouting voices, the reckless murmur, the long room with its worn and dismal formality of furniture, the ragged benches, scattered books, diagrams dark with neglect, dust-lurid air : and at a thought, in the centre of all, that golden vision which appeared almost bodily immanent by the force and passion of loving remembrance : that treasure which was all one's own, and yet seemed, by some mysterious magic, transfused into all around it ; omnipresent as Nature to the youthful Wordsworth, by process of a diviner Pantheism. The desk before me was fretted with a hundred initials ; my own, I remember, cut on a scale I thought of magnitude hitherto unreachd. I dare not give *Désirée*'s such honours ; I wrote her name everywhere, and effaced it : the very form of the letters, as they disappeared, assumed a talismanic and individual life, a look of superhuman sweetness. If I saw them repeated, as in the initials of a name on a book's title-page, or abroad anywhere in the street, they gave a sanctity to the place of

their occurrence ; they smiled on me for delight and for encouragement.

IX Again, on any occasion of school-festivity, joyous union for games, or talk, or excursion with the friends of the day, there was yet a further and special happiness to withdraw the mind from circumstances of present pleasure, recalling the moments when I had seen Désirée last. This was a triumph of irony ; a contrast that truly seemed, whatever the joy of the moment, between earth and heaven.

I might think of many such scenes. . . . O ! let me pause here an instant,—for we then met often. How one afternoon she had consecrated by exhibition of the toys and treasures of a girl's childhood : a birthday watch-chain I remember especially, because in far other days I saw it again by chance, and the sight pierced me : how we had interchanged little gifts : how I had stolen with success (and my heart swelled with pride at the little *ruse*, not worth commemoration) one relic of nearer personality : the name written by the hand. . . . Lately I lighted on the torn fragment, in one of those reliquaries of the past that gather round us as the faith and fire of youth grow feeble ; the dreadful drawer which we think we shall never open again by choice, and under some sad impulse open at last without necessity. The paper, gazed at once with such fond intensity that her countenance had appeared often to look out on me from the letters, was covered also with many prayers for Désirée, remembrances dated at each famous city on journeys through France and Italy. I looked : I read these defeated supplications : but I could not recall her face now ; but I could pray no longer.

It was not so in those ages of faith. In the expectant

silence of the central cricket-field, in the hubbub of the classroom (to venture on one picture more), I saw a village church near the sea, and Darling and I were together in the little Gothic crypt, and wandering over the roof, or touching hands as I aided her blithe ascent to the highest tower : and how I drove her home through narrow lane and common-place street, and we talked of friends, and books, and sky, and scenery, and everything together, and I could so little doubt of love for love, childhood's blessed faith, that I never inquired whether her eyes answered mine with an equal animation. 'How often, and what words she 'spoke !' the breezes should have borne them, or fancy fools me, within the golden halls of heaven. . . . These thoughts were my waking dream amongst young companions : as I looked at their happy faces, an eternity of their joys, it seemed, was far outweighed by one instant of my happiness.

X The events of those days were trivial, little things truly, although the little things of love ; it is not the facts, as I have said, but the glory of their investing sensations I wish to narrate. Yet one there was so special, so delightful from the accident of its occurrence, that I cannot pass by the bitter pleasure of recording it. I had returned (for two or three years have now passed) from a college success, to be welcomed at school with the honours set apart on such conjunctures for schoolboys. There was the feast at the Master's house, the congratulation of the seniors, the welcome from those already successful ; a little intoxication of pleasure ; a sense of first entry on real life. And, this concluded, without I found the blither and more demonstrative greeting from my comrades, shouts, and

brave good wishes, and warm hands clasped in mine, and the rude and animated procession which carried me in triumph round the playing field. But on that afternoon, by a coincidence heartfelt and striking the more, because sight of her, as we passed childhood but had not reached independent years (with the further impediment of school-residence), had now grown rarer, a far other triumph awaited me. That was the 'beyond beyond', to take Imogen's phrase, an hour with Désirée. Who would pretend to recall the words spoken, and fifteen years intervening? But she had come to give me joy of my success; it was enough: I fell down in spirit, and worshipped the dear child whose lightsome glee and 'sorrise parolette' of congratulation were more animating than contest, more satisfying than victory.

XI In those years she was not only, as one said felicitously of his love, '*plus femme que les autres*': Désirée was all womanhood to me. When with others, I laughed to myself in triumph to think by what immeasurable space any and every other was distanced from her. I might have met the ladies of Arthur's court, Helen and Beatrice, Perdita and Una, and the interest to me would have been only their privilege of sharing her sex, and reflecting so much of her excellences as allowed me to recognize how far she exceeded them. That antagonism I have noticed between Absence and Presence, the with her and the without her, extended its subtle contrast through every moment of the day; through all the particulars of life. Désirée, and Not Désirée, were truly more to me than the 'Not I' and the 'I' to the Idealist Philosopher. To listen for the arrival of the noble child, to think myself, as it were, into her thoughts,

to call on Heaven to sever the too strictly inseparable bond between Flesh and Spirit and take me to the desired presence,—to ‘ put on and cast myself upon the wings of ‘ thought ’ thither with such intensity of longing, that my own soul must, I fancied, have been with her, as we read of the second sight, in actual vision :—not for days, but years, these were my follies perhaps, but follies beyond the world’s choicest wisdom. Often I gave her books, not so much for the gift’s sake, as that I might give myself beforehand the physical pleasure of writing Désirée’s name on the title-page. Treasures of art or wonders of science appeared now unlovely sources of bare instruction, not of enjoyment : ‘ the light that never was on sea or land ’ often extinguished the splendour of lake and mountain. Even on distant journeys, whilst delighting in the spectacle, I found a secret irony of further delight in the simple remembrance of her dearness. To see the glory and the gloom of Florence, the pomp and pathos of Rome, Alps and Apennines, Aegæan and Adriatic, *these* men counted amongst the golden hours, the choice circumstances of life :—but God had blessed me with loftier privileges in an English nursery.

XII Thus the period of my school-life passed away : amidst the fitful earnestness of boyish study, with its hours of laborious despair and trances of the first delight in Beauty and Greatness : amidst the emulous animation of boyish games, the weeks of happiness by seaside or river, the wild pulsation and tumult of coming life, the laughter of friends, the peace of home, the reveries of passion. Meanwhile, to match the enlargement of years, the ‘ inward ‘ service ’ of the mind had in some degree grown wider,

and that childly love, a trifle and unworthy record even in memory, if evanescent with childhood, had passed also from a simple, unreflecting, all-satisfying Delight into some consciousness of hope and fear, something of manlier aim, if not to definite plan, or spoken words, or such confessions as were whispered across the balcony of Verona. I had been a child

that thought there was no more behind  
But such a day to-morrow as to-day,  
And to be boy eternal.

But now the relations of individual desire to the circumstances of life ; the relations of my individual life to kindred, friends, neighbours, the world without ; the larger relations, lastly, of our own age to the many centuries preceding, and, even more imaginatively impressive, our yet hidden and unrealized partnership in futurity,—all these began dimly to unfold themselves. And as in such lessons something is learned from actual life, but more, during the limited experiences of boyhood, from books and the thoughts they suggest, a few words on the writings which most affected my mind will be excused, let me anticipate, by the friend or two for whom I write, and the unknown friends by sympathy for whom I hope I am writing. At least I ask their pardon if, once or twice, I indulge the egotism of tracing the successive gradations of delight or instruction through which the master-spirits of the world led me ; if I turn from the image of Désirée to the inward efforts to make myself more worthy her ; if (and by quotation also I shall take the license)

Intesso fregi al ver, s'adorno in parte  
D'altri dilette che de' tuoi, le carte.

XIII Without reference to the journal, written when each day was golden and appeared to deserve an immediate commemoration, I could not retrace the exact steps of this progress. But the oldest leaves, like the Annals of the Pontifex of Rome in brevity and want of colour, give only the titles of the books read ; I must supply from memory what comparative value and pleasure I gained in the reading. Dante and Shakespeare are first and most recurrent in that chronicle. Then during the earlier holidays, I find efforts to master Sophocles and Juvenal ; efforts mainly of freewill, and hence likelier to teach appreciation of these books than the fated taskwork of school, in which, as other boys, I could not at first separate the pleasure of learning from the sensation that I was compelled to learn. But the ponderous sentences and emphatic one-sidedness of the Satirist affected me *then* far more than the large wisdom of the Poet, his crystal tranquillity, his modest grace and refined passion. He was too remote from our thoughts and ways : the love of his heroic world, not mine ; too sensual at once, and too little earthly. Sympathizing rather after my own measure with Dante, I could not worship that beauty in Antigone which had touched me to the life in Beatrice,—the golden-haired Christian child who had walked the actual streets of Florence, while the passers-by cried ‘ Miracle ’, and her young lover fainted beneath the fire and blessedness of passion. Thus, unable to master the severe idea of Sophoclean art, unable to find an echo to my own heart’s language in the silver flow of anapaest and iambic, the calm words which conceal such intensity of feeling, I should have presumptuously misesteemed this great Poet, if the strong testimony of centuries had not warned me that

one reward of maturer years might be initiation into his mysteries : and for the narrative of those years I reserve some notice of that or of analogous experiences.

XIV Scott and Shakespeare were read to me, even more than by me, so early that the thought of these writers hardly suggested books ; they were living presences. As the pages were opened, and a dear voice, long silent or unheard, unfolded the incidents of ' Waverley ' or of the ' Tempest ', a something, to my youthful fancy, seemed to have entered the room ; whilst pursuing our common tasks, we were yet breathing a new atmosphere. Each immortal work called up its own colour and tone of feelings, a world peopled with peculiar shapes ; I became part of what I listened to. A local habitation, an individual landscape attached itself to every romance or poem ; a background before which the actors seemed invariably moving. Long before visiting them, I had a Scotland and a Venice of my own ; a fairy island and a grove for Ferdinand and Miranda beyond the research of travellers. I have seen the palaces that edge the Brenta since, or star the green slopes of Mosolente, but no Belmont was there ; I have seen Verona, but not the balcony of Juliet. . . . And, opening now Scott or Shakespeare, this old child's vision haunts me yet ; the actual scenes never occur ; I am still moving about in worlds never to be realized.

Every picture in the magical series then gave equal pleasure in itself ; but ' Ivanhoe ' allowed me, I remember, the special delight of identifying the fair heroine with at least the outward features of Désirée. This was exceptional ; yet throughout this region Désirée was spiritually present. It was not that in such moments I thought of



her consciously, heard her voice in every song, or saw her countenance in Lucy or Beatrice or Imogen. To the quickly ranging mind of boyhood, eager for the story, or absorbed in the verse, such unceasing immanence of passion is perhaps impossible ; I, at least, cannot claim it. But Love, I may truly say, had lent the light in which Genius now appeared before me ; strengthened the soul to grasp the manlier forms and ‘ certain step ’ of Heroism, or planted eyes of recognition for the footprints of Beauty. Deep passion gives the mind depth, or seems to give : we see not only further into the soul of things, but refer every circumstance and incident to a hidden unity, to a larger law. The whole world seems to radiate from our own heart’s mistress ; she is the true point of the converging forces of Nature ; the unknown and stellar centre of the universe. . . . Why should philosophers inquire further ? Désirée, I could have said, is what you seek.—Love, subordinating the many to the one, teaches us science before we are aware ; we have entered without knowing it on a new life, and feel that we are less children than we thought ourselves.

XV Thus she whose image distracted my thoughts from study, first animated me to study with thought. But this advance was gradual and tardy. In the reading hitherto mentioned, the story for itself had been my main interest : *that* was indeed secretly sustained by the writer’s essential gifts, but I could not as yet separate these from the narration, or take pleasure in imaginative excellence itself, regarded as a distinct thing ; in the poetry, briefly, for poetry’s sake. I hesitate and regret almost to hint,—so many tender memories, so much gratitude is associated with the great works then *read* to me,—that by this mode of acquaintance-

ship, interest in the plot, more than in the poetical truth and power, receives, to young hearers, a rather undue emphasis : the natural bias of youth is over-strengthened, as, (on the stage), the action hurries us on too rapidly for perception of individual lines of beauty, or, if felt, we cannot linger over them. But, meanwhile, I was myself incapable of such deeper appreciation. I listened to Shakespeare ; but I read Pope. Although grateful now to this poet for much enduring pleasure, and admiring his truly conscientious and artist-like finish, his noble good sense, keenness, and courage, I see that in boyhood what attracted me was the monotony of Pope's even syllables, the lines which were comprehensible without effort, the bitterness of his often one-sided wrath and mad exasperation against rivals. How sad and weak this, or the satire of the ' Anti-Jacobin ', which soon after I almost revelled in, now seem ! Satirical writings, beyond almost any others, I think, should be kept from the young ; they seem framed to influence them unduly. A few years' experience gives us the needful balance of facts for judgment, and we may read Pope, and Juvenal, and Horace, with ' glorious gain ' : but *then*, the pointed verse drives the caricature home, the storm of poignant invective persuades, and every couplet infects with prejudice. . . . I turn to ' fields invested with larger and purer aether '. ' Christabel ' and the ' Ancient Mariner ', the visions of Coleridge's mighty youth, or the divine landscapes of the ' Allegro ' and ' Penseroso ', were the first poems, if I rightly remember, which I began, but imperfectly, to delight in as such : slowly my mind was attuned to their high and passionate thoughts by the music to which they were chanted.

XVI Each great writer, and the holy poets most, from the more pervadent unity of their writings, is ' Lord of a ' vast province ', Creator of his own world, King of a separate star. Of these realms, some we visit in youth ; others we gaze at, it may be, for years ; but prejudice, indolence, or caprice, delay our entrance. We visit them all perhaps at last, but are not always admitted to citizenship, and sometimes decline it. . . . Summing up the incidents of life, I must count it an evil that several years of my youth, how many I should be ashamed to tell, were lost to Wordsworth. This was partly personal dulness ; partly the sense of a certain want of passion, the passion of love especially, in this noble poet ; partly the misguiding effect of Byron's flippant satire, and that, I know not whether cowardice or animation, which leads the young always to side with the laughers. I am ignorant if any nation built temples to Momus ; but I think that no God in this age receives more costly sacrifices. And did Byron recompense me this wrong ? O no ; he appeals to our youth mainly by second-rate heroism ; by sarcasms, inconsiderate and merciless ; by humorous exposure of the hypocrisy of our elders, and encouragement to the passions that need no inciting. But this is the vulgar side, the mere aristocratic, of Byron. Looking at them now no longer as rivals, I am thankful that two such men should have spoken our thoughts for us, should have prophesied for their century, in the ' Excur-sion ' and in the ' Pilgrimage '. This knowledge, however, was then far from me. Wordsworth, it is allowed, is rarely felt by the young ; and I think Byron, in his essential elements, rarely can be. The sight of other lands, the experience of life and of sorrow, *these* are needful before a man

can really fathom the force, and truth, and passionate warmth of this great genius ; ' his deep sympathy with ' justice, kindness, and courage ; his intense reach of pity '. He has a thousand faults (for this knowledge must also come) but such merits cover all. If more were needed, we remember Byron's glorious death, and *multum dilexit* is his epitaph.

XVII Although, however, I still turned with foolish contempt from Wordsworth, and thought it an act of judgment exquisitely humorous and original to repeat with servile obsequiousness the miserable criticism of then popular judges on Shelley, Keats, and Tennyson, other poets, pitying perhaps this blindness, by their sweet music led me on to some sympathy with the Imagination and Fancy in themselves—to some love of poetry for its own sake. Sooner or later, this change must have come : it was immediately due to the accident by which another work or series of works had now superseded Scott's for the holiday evening lecture. Taking them up for myself, ' Kenilworth ', the first so read, was a tumultuous flood of delight, a day's pageantry and revel. If, as now he hastened through Scott's remaining and later novels, a certain hollowness in the purely *human* life of the principal characters, a too great reliance on antiquarian research became, even to a boy, perceptible—the newly-gained consciousness of their perpetual poetry of sentiment was far more than compensation. And, mastered by this feeling, when one bright summer's day (for this too has its influence), after many glowing pages of the pathetic ' Monastery ', I, sympathizing with the hero's passion and if I remember rightly, with the circumstances of his love, reached Halbert's Invo-

cation to the Lady of Avenel, the Spirit herself, I believe, in absolute vision, would have been a less wonder-working Presence to me than those two brief stanzas of unearthly music. Like a new colour, they seized the mind's eye, and for days haunted my recollection :—they seemed to endow me with a fresh sense : they were an authentic spell, unveiling secrets of melody and majesty far beyond those even which the story ascribed to their talismanic virtue. On the fairy realm thus opened with a word I entered in the confidence of youth. Dante in the ' *Commedia* ' and lyrical poems, Scott in the ' *Bride of Lammermoor* ', Spenser in his songs of impassioned regret or triumph, ' *Epithalamium* ' and ' *Daphnaida* ', Shakespeare in the *Sonnets*—each appeared either with me in actual personality, or by a contrary mode of identification, what I read had been, somehow, far off, when or where I knew not, my own creation or experience. Thus I triumphed, thinking at each splendid line of these sacred singers in prose or verse, I had gathered a new jewel to offer Désirée ; and when we met (now, as already noticed, for the time less frequently) shared treasures with her, to find them thenceforward shining with a twofold glory, consecrated with a special tenderness. They seemed hers henceforth ; I could have affirmed she had taught them me.

XVIII I have spoken of the master-writers as sovereigns each over his own separate star. But we may conceive them, also a glorious company, such as Dante met in the emerald meadow,—men of more than our stature, and bearing on their faces the calm of an immortal sadness, and the smiles of eternal delight. Below the high rock on which, as one of themselves long ago sang, they stand around Excellence,

they see men contending in the unprofitable strife or traversing the dusty highways of earth : but sometimes a few, and chiefly the young, strike off from the crowd, and climb the high rock, and are not checked by the 'soul-corroding labour', but gain the summit,—and the holy throng stands there, and reaches them friendly hands, and each accepts the welcome from that Master-spirit with whom his own soul is most in communion, and speaks with him awhile apart, and goes down towards the other labourers on the meadow of life strengthened, and perhaps with new aims for his labour from intercourse with the Immortal ; and some great sentence of wisdom or melodious counsel that he has learned above is on his lips, as he leaps down the crag ; and the many smile as he joins them on the highway, and he is silent, but carries with him an inner music in his heart to his labour. And then, if the youth finds or meets the Desired, his lips are again unsealed, and he teaches her what he had learned on that lofty place, and she repeats it to him, and he fails to know the words again, they come so changed from her lips, deepened in their wisdom, more musical in their melody, sweeter in their sweetness.

XIX But there were other regions, where Désirée's image only and recollection could accompany me. That common repugnance to the studies of school from which I can claim no exemption, never extended itself—I write it with thankfulness—to the books so studied. And presently, more familiar conversance with the two great treasure-languages of antiquity (so unmeaningly termed Classical) opened the door to the first comprehension of those writings, which are amongst the most powerful of all outward circumstances in forming the mind ; which, awaking an

answer from our own unexplored and hidden consciousness, or replying to the questions of the soul, in the strictest sense perform the work of Education. Now first, as in the South we gaze, a week's journey distant, on some vast mountain whose name alone has magic, and are startled to see the terror of sharp precipice and torn glacier, and the tranquil summit itself, so near us, and yet a hundred miles of crystal-line silence between, and the sight lures us onwards—the power of the Gods of Greece far off shone out on me, and their serene dwelling-places :

apparet divum numen sedesque quietae,  
 quas neque concutiunt venti nec nubila nimbis  
 aspergunt, neque nix acri concreta pruina  
 cana cadens violat, semperque innubilus aether  
 integit, et large diffuso lumine ridet.

But I was as yet an ignorant, a timid, a distant worshipper: a week of years had to pass before sorrow, and solitude, and study empowered me to feel my own steps, or think I felt, planted on that central summit ; to see the great phantom company ' girdled with the gleaming world ' and lying beside their nectar ; to drink from the golden cups in which it has been stored for us and all the ages by Homer, and Sappho, and Simonides, and Pindar, and Aeschylus, and Heracleitus, and Plato.

XX Gleams, however, of that ' untravelled world ' now began to break on me through the story of Ulysses ; and as I read of Ajax, Oedipus, and Antigone, and compared these images with the marbles of the Parthenon or with engravings from Raphael which through access to a vast collection now became known to me, the grace, and truth, and hidden

heat of Athenian passion were gradually revealed. Ovid's 'Fasti',—those nursery tales of Rome told by an incredulous poet in his most choice and finished verse,—deepened the impression of the mysterious ancient world ; of the vast strata of forgotten faith and practice (and I know few lessons of the past, if any, more solemnly and pathetically instructive), which, like the deep leaf mould of aboriginal forests, underlie, feed, and at last incorporate the proud foliage of the passing summer. But this impression was partial and imaginative : a foretaste, a dim earnest, or at most a gleam 'like the flashing of a shield', whilst the human form that bore it was hidden. From the fragments in which, by a common but injudicious school arrangement, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Livy were studied, I learned little : it is, I think, only when read in their continuity, and in more experienced years, that these great histories properly seize on the mind. Cicero's philosophical works, the shorter essays especially, conveyed almost the pleasure of poetry by the vague largeness of the thought, the sweetness and latter-day humanity of the moral sentiments, the fine cadences and balanced amplitude of the style. Yet my profit in these studies was lessened by a perversity or narrowness of view from which my companions were free. For, influenced by some foolish fancy, I hardly know whence derived, in all ancient works I endeavoured to trace foreshadowings of Christian religious feeling, or presumptuously contrasted what I imagined the imperfect morality and half-vision of poets and philosophers with the better things of the middle or modern ages. Thus Plato and Lucretius were for some years (I note it as a warning to any youthful and sympathetic reader) rendered useless to me by a boy's weak vanity.



Their masterworks fared as an ancient statue among children, chipped and dishonoured one day, the next decorated with toys and dressed up in finery : I christianized the one, and anathematized the other. A translation of Aristotle's *Nikomachean Ethics*, drawn forth one morning from a corner of my father's library, first broke these clouds a little. That great lordly morality, presented in a form so severe and dissimilar even from Cicero's treatment, impressed the boy with a vague sense of incomprehensible awe : a blind reverence. Amongst these Titanic shapes of Virtue and of Vice, ranked in vast series by Aristotle's scientific method, and converging to the high vision of Theoretic Happiness, I felt like a child wandering through the Sphynx avenue of Thebes, and putting questions to Memnon.

XXI But the most heartsome and the most continuous delight I then owed to Virgil : a debt so deep, that if any consciousness of mortal things and our weak words is felt in Elysian Fields, ' *si qua est ea gloria* ', I would willingly discharge a portion now, by an earnest, a fervent expression of revelling thankfulness. I should not indeed have taken arms for him, had ' *Odyssey* ' and ' *Aeneid* ' been at any time the banners or battle-cries of our schoolboy warfaring, for Homer was the greater and more inspiring God ; yet many causes made Virgil the closer cherished favourite, the playing-field and fireside darling. His language was the more comprehensible ; his art (an excellence earlier appreciated by boys, from their narrow practical experience, than the larger nature of Homer) far more constantly and sensibly present ; and his poems, *Bucolica* and *Georgica* in particular, richer in the single lines and ' jewels five-words-long ', which the reader seems able to appropriate and

carry off, a personal property : like the carved fragments travellers bear away from Rome, or the flowers presented for remembrance as they leave the Doria Gardens of Genoa. Virgil's combats, again, and games,—and not less the morality pervading the sixth book of his Epic,—are distinctively modern compared with Homer's ; they touch a child more readily.

From my own recollections, indeed, I might justly say, that to boyhood, so favoured in its exemption from critical pedantry or the world's sneer at imaginative enthusiasm, Virgil, as in the middle ages, is a magician still. As a personal companion, with whom more than most living comrades I had held converse of delightful intimacy, I loved him then, and love him now : I would not surrender this visionary affection for many so-called realities. Others too are similarly dear : if there be any recognition after the grave, how rich I am, and in what friends ! But most the lines painting in purple light and with a grace almost super-human the image of passion, allured me. These seemed a prophetic anticipation : songs written nominally indeed for imperial Rome, but in their secret essence destined after nineteen centuries to be a boy's delight, and carry the praises of Beauty beneath the beech-woods of world-exiled and inaccessible Britain. The seer, as men said of old, blended with the poet. Virgil, in his purple-robed and laurelled majesty had stooped to whisper messages of tenderness to an English child : it was Virgil who bade me track that Star by the road of manly excellence. If any one had asked me, when reading for the hundredth time the ' Little one, ' I saw thee gathering the dewy apples ' (lines already quoted), what I read, I might have answered, ' Of Désirée '.

Turnus' dying phrase, that last cry wrung forth when surrendering his bride to one less worthy, the 'tua est Lavinia conjux', shook me, I recollect, with oracular terror by its intensity of passionate resignation :

Hic gelidi fontes ; hic mollia prata, Lycori ;  
hic nemus : hic ipso tecum consumerer aevo—

summed up the sweet abandonment of a desire which, with Gallus, I was to learn could be consummated by no labour, and conquered by no defeat . . . . . Is it a childish pleasure to record these little things ? If so, I am a child yet.

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XXII I have dwelt with some minuteness on my first studies, because, whatever growth of mind belongs to the years under narration was in fact the result mainly of these and of the passion of love. For even at the time I was not much influenced by the premature friendships, since faded, of school : thinking of them almost as contrasts to set off and glorify that ever-present image of Désirée : and this the more, because the strongly marked, and I might say *tumultuous*, avowal of boyish affection, was in its nature antagonistic to the sweet silent secrecy of that other. Nor, again, were the general direction and spirit of the study inculcated, in themselves (I think) elevated, or such as impress those on the threshold of youth : the crises of intellectual life came to any, if they came at all, not from superior guidance, not from a scientifically ordered scheme of education, but through their individual thought, through personal and private intercourse (and perhaps better so) with the master-spirits. I recollect indeed always with affection the venerable buildings in the old Cathedral city,

and the green places where the children of to-day are playing : but it is chiefly an alien interest—the remembrance of the golden-haired child who seemed to leave her own home daily, and all day long, to haunt the trees, and fields, and dark cloisters, and crowded schoolroom, the quaint nooks and slovenly dens in which boys love to ensconce themselves, and consecrate every commonplace into Heaven. More, far more deeply than any associations derived from school, is she interfused in my school recollections. I believe that in those days (and some will not think it a weakness) I never entered the great boisterous hall or left it, never completed any task requiring exercise of youthful powers (and thus a symbol of the prize of life), never took my place in one of the more ambitious games, in cricket-field or football, without supplication for blessing on her, and on me through her. It is no fine fancy, no figure of words, but with strong and sober reason that, looking back to that golden time and the first fires of love, I see her, not only with the noble Poet in sunshine and moonlight, field and billow, in the world without me ; but far more and to higher issues in the world within ; Darling first and last, in hopes and in regrets, in sport and study, in the struggles of earth and the aspirations higherward. The dear parents might guide by love and by example, friends counsel, and masters instruct :—but Désirée was my education.

XXIII Meanwhile, lest any one should judge the tree invidiously by the fruits, and do her image wrong by comparison with her young lover's, he hastens to add, a thing already perhaps evident, that Désirée's *direct* example held, and could hold, but little place in this powerful influence ;

that the dear child was herself absolutely unconscious of the force and fascination ; and that her immanence in his secret soul furnished not a law for conscience, so much as a central point to which all consciousness referred itself—an ideal height, the ascent of which it was his aim in life to compass. Ideal I have called it, but it was not the less real to me ; nay, the reality of realities. This hope, of course, animated to labour and consoled defeat ; by it, in these and the following years at college, I so far conquered a foolish disposition to fancy and reverie, as (under great external advantages) to become a fair scholar, and achieve here and there some little useful success :—success achieved always in her name, for her only ; and O ! I repent of the word, how deeply useless, a mere child's victory, when at last she refused acceptance. If the Goddess spurned the crown, laid on bending knees before her feet in Acropolis by some youthful Athenian, what worth was it to be Olympioconqueror ? What then but a few grey leaves, that crown itself, so lately the central aim of hope, the loadstar of Panhellenic ambition ? Not such, in truth, were my triumphs : but I gave her in heart all I had :—could I do more, could I do less, than stake life on such as *Désirée* ?

Yet whilst confessing for Truth's sake, and without the very least sensation of pleasurable pride, how far the wisdom of love guided me to the love of wisdom, in any points lying without the sphere of that powerful influence, the faults of nature, I shall not conceal, ranged unchecked. Foolish cowardice before others' opinion, foolish longings for wealth, weak shame—these sins against light I confess in their full, their degrading baseness. Vices of temper, and not such as the novelist paints either as incompatible

with their opposites or exaggerations of some nobler quality, but stubbornness and pliability, hasty heat and sullenness, oppression of the weak around me, and irreverent contempt of worth and power, scorn of tenderness, coarseness and conceit—I might lengthen the list, could such a catalogue have any charm. Dear Dr. Johnson stood a winter's day bareheaded on the site of Michael Johnson's bookstall in the market-place of Uttoxeter, contrite and confessing himself ashamed before all men, at his boyish shame for his father's profession. . . . Let me add this only : I remember I blushed to think myself less favoured than some of my companions in parental rank or wealth, and trust that what I thus record against myself may be my forgiveness and atonement.

XXIV It is perhaps hard to say, whether youthful animation, the high and healthy *νεανικόν φρόνημα* even without the reinforcement of special passion, might not have brought with it by natural process that enheartened energy which I have ascribed to the influence of Désirée. But a more glorious gain was it, and hers far more certainly, that, co-operating with holy home guidance, this love carried me unharmed through the 'ambush of young days', and the facilities for delightful sin. Often when friends, then and afterwards, discussing, treated as a natural weakness, a physical necessity (for this, to speak truth, which here at least is without what moralists imagine her inseparable beauty, is men's almost uniform and genuine decision,) the

*κρυπταδὴ φιλότης καὶ μείλιχα δῶρα καὶ εὐνή,*

—did the faintest half remembrance of Désirée chase argument or confession from my mind ; not refuted, perhaps,

but effaced practically by that angel form of young imagination who seemed to purify not her own sex alone, but mine with it. How should others feel the force of this ? God had not given them *Désirée*. I had no need then, as I have no desire now, to enter on such discussion. Often, how often, when the temptation came with promises of pleasure to youth so exquisite (let me once more speak truth, it is best, and truth this time less contestable), with facilities so justifying, that to refuse appeared not only an immense and painful effort, but as not a few, I am aware, with smiles will judge it this moment, whilst they read, an unmanly foolishness,—remembrance of her again silenced every reasoning and impulse with a sensation stronger still : a joy so profoundly passionate that it passed into ‘ pure organic ‘ pleasure ’ ; a bodily translation, it almost seemed, into a kingdom more heavenly than heaven. The dark street was a porch opening on midsummer sunlight : I answered the soft smiles of alluring lasses with smiles I could not restrain for happiness at the vision of the golden-haired child,

—Gli atti, le parole, il viso, i panni—

at the fond thought of her sash, and frock, and bonnet, her frank eyes and confiding words, and nobleness of nature, and high holy simplicity, and how I loved her.

XXV These experiences, however (which, although with hesitation, I think it more courageous not to suppress), belong in the main to the years immediately succeeding boyish life. Returning finally to that period of the pilgrimage, why have I omitted here any reference to actual journeys taken, to the marvels of Art and of Nature ? Blind to much, was I blind then to such beauty ? did I

suffer for scorn of Wordsworth by wandering over mountains without awe, or through forests without pleasure? Not so; but the narrow and perverse judgment already noticed when I spoke of youthful studies, a quality that exists throughout the character where it exists at all, barred me from the humility of heart and self-surrender, without which, however far and delightedly we travel, we are still in the outskirts of Nature,—not endenized at least within her kingdom, or initiated into the true and eternal Eleusis. So far as such boyish reference of all things to self was conscious, I call it perverse and narrow; yet, looking back now to the studies and experiences of early youth, I see that this mode of judgment arose in part from the first activity of the mind, from the concentrated individuality which to any child, and a thoughtful child especially, is the inevitable starting-point of thought. Wordsworth alluded perhaps to a purer, a more imaginative form of this feeling, in the

Obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,

ascribed to the spiritual eye of boyhood. And from this, not only mountains and the sea, stars and sunrise, but every tree of the wayside or forest, every single rock or rivulet, weed or pebble, even the furniture of a room, books and curtains, had a real existence to me: a mysterious life reflected from my own; a personal identity. I seemed to be in them, or they in me . . . I cannot explain these things further; and you, who smile at them? . . .

But this phase of soul, however we judge of it, assuredly is accompanied by certain narrowing and unreal tendencies,



withdrawing the mind from the true study and comprehension of Art and Nature. Thus I now saw the cities of men, but without seeking more than the pleasure of the eye : the woods, hills, and rivers of Ireland, France, and Italy, but with exultation rather than reverence—as a reveller, not as a disciple. ‘ The Being that is in the clouds and air ’ was hidden from me ; the stars of the South veiled their secrets ; the Mediterranean drew them into golden arabesques on its moving surface, but I read no lesson in the deep. Rather, by a new and far different spiritualising process of the mind, in the plenitude of passion, myself I seemed powerful to endow Nature with another being ; to animate her with a diviner image. On the arbutus-feathered rocks which are doubled in Killarney, upon the dark summit of Alpine passes, in the spectral desolation of the Forum Romanum, by the waves that broke between olive and myrtle at Spezzia, or glassed the crimson breath of Vesuvius beneath Pausilippo on the Margellina :—everywhere I walked and shouted *Désirée* ! over the solitude as a spell and invocation. I stood still waiting till rocks, and waves, and winds, star and sun, or that Presence we feel hidden behind the veil of the sky when most dazzling, should answer, *Désirée*. . . . Follies for which the experience of the wise is an unequal ransom ! What mattered it if Nature were silent ? The sea might have its pearls, the heaven its stars, but my heart had Darling.

Among the works of men (the ruins of Rome can hardly be so classed) the same spirit haunted me. In the cities she had seen, it was strange and sweet to look on the careless inhabitants and think that they—this portly shopkeeper sitting at his house-door, or that gay-skirted servant-girl

by the fountain—had perhaps admired the fair English maiden passing by so blithely. Désirée thus touched common things into beauty, and as I visited each great memorial scene she was the remembrance. In places wanting this dear association the cathedral lost its grace, or the ruin its grandeur ; and what was their Past, I thought in my folly, however glorious, compared with my Present ? The Past itself did homage to Désirée : Raphael had drawn her for me in the chambers of the Vatican, and Luini in the frescoes of La Pace.

And when at Florence, on the last pilgrimage falling within this portion of my story, I walked in fancy with the youthful Dante through the narrow Via Ricciarda to what is now named Casa Portinari, it seemed not Beatrice but Désirée we were seeking. . . I lingered behind my guide a few steps ; I whispered her name ; I called on Heaven with such fervency for her presence that, in the firmness of that too youthful and confiding faith which should remove the mountains, I looked round expectant to see *questa gentilissima* then, as last in London, walking the streets of Florence :—

Ella sen va sentendosi laudare  
Benignamente d' umiltà vestuta,  
E par che sia una cosa venuta  
Di cielo in terra a miracol mostrare.

XXVI I quote these lines, some will recognize, from the precious pages in which the youthful Dante has recorded the circumstances of that earthly passion he was in after years to immortalize with a splendour which seems truly the light of Heaven. There is a timid grace in the pictures of that little book, a mannered naturalism of sentiment and

expression (if I may venture the phrase), which reminds me *now* of Perugino's saints, or the rose-garlanded Seraphim who glorified the cell of the visionary Angelico. But in those days I regarded it with the uncritical reverence due to inspiration. Between the noble poet and myself I traced a parallel in the circumstances of passion, which did not *then* appear presumptuous : every song in the mysterious 'Canzoniere' seemed oracular with a double sense, though not that of the commentators : the 'Vita Nuova' was a Gospel of Love. What I admired so, I needs must imitate ; and finding, as was natural, mine far unlike 'that style which so honoured' Dante, I endeavoured to conceal its baldness beneath Latin. Briefly and feebly as I accomplished the task, it could not but lead me, as I read my model, to remembrance of the issue of that sad story ;—that even he saw his Desired another's, and yet no word records *that* deprivation—a silence, I have since often thought, how pathetic !—but passes on to the dream when 'the sun was darkened, and the stars shone pale with weeping, and the birds fell dead from heaven, and earth was shaken, and a messenger ran in with discoloured face, crying, "What doest thou ? Thy darling, who was so fair, is dead !"'—and Dante awoke and found it not a dream. Then, the unhappy marriage, the strife and weariness, the forlorn wandering with its dreadful retinue of misunderstood thoughts and forced smiles, the ever-haunting image of lost love, the deep, deep desideration—Something of all this I felt, by the circumstances of my own imitative attempt, by the force of my sympathy, as I read 'Commedia' and 'Vita Nuova', for this great sufferer. And although the pages of my own immature confession contain little more than

childish facts and childish fancies, yet by the presence of a few words, efforts to think rather than thoughts, and far more by the earnestness of supplication which closes every chapter, I can see that, leaving the first stage when Love to itself was all-sufficient, some hint of possible change in my early heaven, some 'misgivings of a creature moving 'about in worlds not realized', were now fast breaking in on youthful security—signs that a new life, indeed, and hitherto little thought of, was dawning in storm and glow over the horizon of manhood. Nor were these intimations conveyed by reflection only.

XXVII For about this time, and on the point of that leading crisis in life which is in England associated with entrance on one of our Universities, (in England alone places of education not for boys), it chanced that I was with the lady of my love in a retired country-house of Tuscany, and with her, by what I might etymologically at once and absolutely call happiness, for my almost only companion. Some slight occurrence of ill-health or business detained her parents in the city; but I, about to return homewards from Florence on the journey last alluded to through Bologna and Northern Italy, was allowed to spend a day on the road at the 'Tesoretto', a villa they had rented for the summer on the first roots of the ridge which, just above ancient Pistoia, parts the torrent Ombrone from the Bisenzio. That city, my vetturino (for the railway then was not) informed me—wishing, no doubt, to rest there for an hour—had been founded nineteen hundred years before Christ by Saba, surnamed Pistio, elder brother of Nimrod, and Noah's great grandson:—what was this to me? I bade him push on, through the midday sun, glow-

ing even in October, to the Tesoretto of the Valdicampo. Leading by the hand a lovely little sister, whom I shall here call Mary, Désirée at the sound of wheels ran to welcome me in the hall. My driver, struck by the saint-like beauty of the fair English children, called out, I remember, ' Vergine santissima, che miracolo, Madonna dell' Umiltà ' ! (a venerated image at Pistoia) ; but I remember nothing more of the scene, except that exquisite sense of radiant and confusing happiness which accompanied always, and effaced by excess of joy, the first moments with Désirée.

XXVIII We spent the soon-closing afternoon in a chestnut wood above the white Tesoretto. This grove, sloping four hundred feet up from the torrent, appeared like a natural temple ; a vast labyrinth of almost equal columns, as we read of the mosque of Cordova ; and, like that, vaulted over at the same elevation (reckoning from the immediate ground-level) throughout, but with curve and fretwork of even more than Arabian fancy. The high-channelled stems, scarcely narrowing for forty feet, allowed our eyes to range unimpeded to the topmost crest, where the last leafage was lighted with a silver brilliance ; or, if directly before the sun, leafage and boughs seemed dark with excessive glory. Here and there above us, as we climbed the sliding cliff with delight, the wind that could not reach us stirred in the extreme pinnacles and shook them into feathery sparkles ; and high, then, over the highest boughs we saw the pale trembling of the crystalline heavens. Further on and nearer the summit, as we seemed by measurable advances to approach the sun, stars, green and golden, blazed flickeringly amongst the leaves, or at any more dividing gust pierced as with sudden radiances, fitful

shafts :—we looked at each other with laughing dazzled eyes, and turning for relief to the green shade, traced the lightning lines which, in silent swiftness of curvature, ran over grey rock, and woodbine net, and the first fallen autumnal leaves that strewed our Vallombrosa. God seems expressly to have created such scenes that in their largess of beauty they might alone suffice to still the sighs, and efface for a moment the regretful remembrance of His creatures ; to ransom existing pain, and hint a recoverable Paradise. But by Désirée's dear side the chestnut grove of Valdicampo was my present Eden. That ' suppression of the heart which ' joy delights in ', I had not yet learned to feel ; we were sensible indeed of a ' spirit in the woods ', but our talk was on the gay experiences of a summer in Italy ; of what I had seen in Naples and Rome ; of the parents and sisters lately left in Florence. A thousand forgotten words rang through the ' holy halls ', I remember so well ; and as Désirée's brave simple spirit led her on to thread every waterbreak and attempt all rocks of promising difficulty, what scramblings followed, what precious instants of assistance, what shouts and silver accents of divine and inextinguishable laughter ! In her wild caprice of gaiety she seemed one of the water fairies of some northern forest, intoxicated with the deep fresh breath of the woods ; she should have been crowned, I thought, with mint and lake-lilies : the hem of her dress at least, like the Nixes', was wet with struggling up the beds of runlet torrents, and gathering the ferns and reeds and golden St. John's wort which feathered every bend and pool where the waters grew level and lingered. Each instant our words ran more riot, till hand in hand we reached a stone on which, below the lily shield of Florence,

was written the device ' FEDELE LEALE ', and over it saw Valdarno at a glance, one hollow of hot haze to the hills beyond Fiesole, and were silenced.

XXIX That evening, when, after Désirée had roused the Tuscan echoes with old-remembered English airs and the manly pathos of Handel, through a long corridor I had reached my room, many childish thoughts, but amongst them the first conscious thoughts for life, crowded on me in the darkness. ' God's glory, watchfulness ', has been by John Henry Newman touchingly called ' man's disease ' ; but I was far from this bitter—this, I trust, not universal experience : to me, at least, the silences of the night were *then* filled with memories of more than earthly sweetness : to wake from the death of sleep, and at one instant's thought be with Désirée, appeared often almost to equal the miracle of a resurrection. And to this pleasure was here added the exquisite sense that not only was I lying within shelter of the same house, but that, by the fact of her parents' absence, that house might be considered hers : there was holiness in the walls, and peace in the timbers :—the very furniture, I extravagantly thought, had something sacred in it—a certain sweet personality. Now, however, came the heart-quickenings conviction, shouted by many voices at once—by that day's delight in her undivided companionship, by growing sensations of life, by approaching entrance on what I might not unjustly call life itself, and loudest and purest, by the voice of love ; that though there *could* be but two answers, and one—I could *not* think of that—yet it might be timely time to speak ; that the hour had struck ; that, for fear of risking all, I must risk something. Silent I had hitherto been, in part from the mere fact of youth,

in part from a familiarity dating almost before youth itself. There seemed no room to say one morning, Love me more than yesterday. Désirée was in truth so identified with every thought—so incorporated, I might say, in the actual texture of my heart—so much myself—that I hardly had words to address her. Thus circumstanced, even could I have doubted her love, had I not this day proof the strongest and the most exquisitely winning of her frank and confiding affection, of interest which entrusted me with every incident of her life, and asked my story in return, her soul open to mine, and no veil interposed ; how should I ask more, or how ask at all ? Ah ! for such requests, even although at last we say something, not knowing what we say, there are no human words : how compass the Infinite through the Finite ? . . . *Feal and Leal* should be my heart's device :—My career of work now opening, and inaugurated by hours of happiness so transcendent, should prove me worthier my desire, and my eyes watch every hint of its accomplishment. It was enough, meanwhile, to be sure that no one held a dearer place in her true sisterly affection,—to triumph in the security of passion which, as the wise of old said of wisdom, brought with it first silence, and then peace.

XXX 'Stormy and pale', to quote a song not then written, arose the next morning. For a half-hour's interval the little Mary was on my knee : she praised her sister with a child's warm-hearted admiration ; her eyes brightened at my answer ; she rewarded me with kisses for loving Désirée. Then my passionate evocations, which had already a hundred times traversed the chestnut stair, appeared to have fulfilled their innocent mission ; and 'Paradise', as Wordsworth has it (under shield of that great calm spirit



let me shelter myself from the hint of excess), ' by the simple ' opening of a door, let itself in upon me '. Again came the long discourse on a thousand household and summer memories ; again ' the mutual smile when hearts are of each ' other sure ' ; again the impulse to speak ; again the terror with which Love recoils from the syllable Love—the mysterious Anteros of Eros. Meantime rain fell fast, and the sun-dried Ombrone breathed a thanksgiving in vaporous exhalations ; the rush and swirl of its waters deepened, and, listening at an open window, we heard fresh cataracts burst into life and answer from the heart of the forest ravines above us.

But the hour for starting to meet the diligence at the summit of the pass had arrived ; their English nurse remonstrated to no purpose ; Désirée, with her frank simplicity, would accompany me to the roadshed at La Collina. That drive is among the treasures of memory ; I do not envy him who does not envy. Why, however, is recollection, clear as if on familiar matters of to-day in recalling the local circumstances of happiness, silent on the words which were one main portion (Désirée's simple presence, and Hope, the other) of that felicity ? As by the bridge of Guado we drove slowly up the winding way, the mist was often fitfully withdrawn, and we saw the massy chestnut domes, the keen cypress spires, the shoulders of gleaming pine through veils of silver. The hill-haze, by degrees melting in fine fringes, went aloft into the clouds of the upper sky, and the blue now opened through a torn silken chasm like a lake suspended, and with its own swanlike specks of vapour, in ' soft inversion ' above us. Then suddenly the heaven cleared—sunbeams travelling from rocks and high

towering clouds where, through the shattered mist, we had just before seen them resting, sparkled below and around on ten thousand raindrops ; we looked down on a sea of dark-topped vines and olives, intersected by the dim serpentine Arno, bearing southward from Castello to Florence. Pistoia with her many domes and towers was below, sunk in hot haze beside the level highway of the Ombrone, and edged with shining houses beyond, the white line of road to Serravalle. This was, in fact, one of three views which our ascent successively afforded us. Splintered rocks, rich in verdure climbing and clinging, gay with butterflies and alive with simmering *cicale* ; and over the rocks, shorn russet cornfields, planted with the cherry and the pear, composed another. But, more impressive perhaps than even the vast Valdarno, and momentarily assuming a nearer and more personal importance, was our third prospect : the tossed and distempered Apennines—a dappled scene of a thousand lights and blue shadows, curves, and seams, and crests, topped by the ragged clouds that floated at last into one long white floor above, whilst an amethystine gleam, like some false sunset, burned behind their purple summits.

XXXI Meanwhile our conversation ran most on the little things of home, on the dear country I was to see a few weeks earlier than Désirée, on my own plans, more especially fears and hopes for that new life which was awaiting me. How many meaningless fancies—foolish alarms—she dispersed with the smiling wisdom of her sunbright courage, with the counsels of the ‘ royal heart of innocence ’ ! This fair scene we felt rather than studied ; and if any tone of human reflectiveness, any ‘ pathetic fallacy ’, has entered my brief description, they are due to that other and more

refracting mist of years through which I now see it. No space was then for such interferences :

But we received the shock of mighty scenes  
On simple minds with a pure natural joy :

roused only so far to conscious harmony with nature, that we could, as it were by right, repeat aloud our favourite passages—six-line masterpieces of colour and condensation from the ‘ *Commedia* ’, or miracles of ‘ sweetness long ‘ drawn out ’ from those pages on which Milton has emblazoned his twin landscapes of immortal beauty. So we reached the white cottage of La Collina. It went hurriedly by ; and yet the hour whose ‘ unalloyed happy moments ’ I would fain eternalize in recollection, was a crisis for me in the inner life, far beyond a year’s worldly experience : between base and summit of this ascent I had climbed, I might truly say, from boyhood to manhood. I had measured in some degree the worth of the love I was seeking—the high generosity of nature—the clear intellect—the stainless unselfishness. Should I speak now ? O no : I must prove myself worthy the prize : I could not dare offer a mere love for love to one so dowered with God’s best gifts ; a mere child’s heart, however faithful, to this heiress in her own right to the nobler nobility of Nature. I could not speak ; and something whispered, I had no need of speaking. La Collina was a Pisgah whence I looked onwards over a life rich in the promise of blessings so profound, happiness so august and plenary, that God Himself, with His own best, I thought, could hardly better it.

XXXII Then, to crown all by the sharpness of its contrast, came a farewell such as, in Dante’s pathetic phrase,

'leaves the dear one even more endeared'. A fresh storm was gathering over the forest, and whilst on the summit of the pass I awaited the diligence from Pistoia, Désirée drove quickly down. Our parting words had been few : I should have been little happy, and little sad, if I 'could have 'said how much'. But before the first turn of the roadway had hidden her broad hat and golden hair, from some fancy she stopped the light carriage and looked round. However resolved, who could resist such opportunity ? In a moment I stood again beside her ; the bond of reserve was broken, and my second farewell was whispered fast in words of tenderness and confession—words unheard amidst the immediate distraction of approaching wheels, and the downrush of a sudden rain. . . . Hastily, as after crime, I ran back to La Collina : another confused and forgotten moment, and I was hurrying down a bare Alpine valley, where a chill mist arched out the sky, and snow glistened on the upper peaks, and the dark torrent Reno was rushing northwards, and away from Désirée. The sound of this youthful noisy companion and monitor was hateful ; I heard accents of everlasting farewell in its hoarse under-murmurings. But when, three days later, the road at Malalbergo below desolate Ferrara finally crossed that stream, now slowly straining its waters through the marshes of Comacchio into the Adriatic, I looked on the Reno as a friend, and blessed it for remembrance of its mountain source high over Valdicampo. I saw but one image, and thought but one thought, during the homeward journey. From that visit to Venice the single picture I can recall is a child seated in some palace balcony, its cradle. As my gondola passed, the pure little hand held out a few

green leaves above me ; sunbeams touched the blue dress at her shoulder ; her delicate features were chequered with warm bars of light, and shadowed by torrents of golden hair that reminded me of Désirée's. At Milan I looked on indeed, but as if in dreams, where, flickering with a thousand pinnacles, the marble wonder of the Duomo went up like a white fire into heaven ; but with the real eyes saw only the fresco in which the wedded ecstasy of Joseph, chosen by the miracle of the budding palm-rod for that legendary betrothal, and kneeling before his royal bride, has been represented by Luini with an almost superhuman intensity of passionate abandonment.

XXXIII Many years later, and I am passing what must be, I know, almost the anniversary of the day of La Collina, near a seaside city of Neustrian France. Grey in its depths, pale rose and emerald in its shallows, the sea ripples at my feet with a low sweet murmur, a lisp as when children come close and whisper their secrets. Yielding to the pleasure of an ancient superstition, I count the waves, and fancy the tenth rolls in with a whiter mass, a subdued undertone of power. If there were any spiritual voice from the deep, I should hear it now : for there is no human sound but the measured beat of pile-drivers at the harbour ; no human sight to break the spell but a few idle fisher-boats, their brown sails spread indeed, but motionless. The heavy sun, sinking like Adonis into a bed of dense violet, sends a few ruddy rays to the shore ; but reserving for his own regions his more especial glory, overweaves the pale heavens above with a golden network, a wide web of living flashes, through which the last arrows of his radiance strike upward into the azure grey of the zenith skies, Looking round leftwards I

see the castle, a crowd of walls and pointed turrets and ancient houses on the rampart's edge, massed in Durer-like picturesqueness : beyond, white crags, stained with ooziings of the red turf-topped soil, crumble down over the beach in fragments angular and abrupt, and contrasted with the long horizontal lines of repose which score the chalky bastions. These stretch far west in warm grey, and again my eyes are led back to the darkening sea and that great spectacle of sunset. But the deep pleasure of this vision, a pleasure deeper and purer than in first youth any sight could give, appears arrested now before it reaches me ; barred by some mysterious power from alleviating Regret, or from enforcing. One bitter lesson of grief has been to learn the limits of Nature ; to know how much she does for her children, and how little : to see the rainbow without hope, and the dawning without exultation : to find no sympathy in the glories of the sunset, and no friendliness in the ' silences of the night '. I can look no longer to the hills for help, or to the skies for pity. With the one prayer left, I can call on Désirée only, only—for a little respite at least—for some syllable of mercy, some hint of Heaven, some holy whisper of awakening affection, and love returned. Without any memorial in earth or sky, no purple-cleft cloud as that seen by Wordsworth's Matthew, this day brings fresh into my mind the day of so long-lost blessedness at La Collina. I see the rocks, and winding descent, and she who stops, and the eyes that recalled me. I summon her soul within mine with such earnestness of purpose that I think the prayer is heard at last, that, heralded by the breezes pouring now in steady flood landwards, some full-sailed happiness is pressing up beyond the

motionless and torturing horizon. Faith triumphs, the skies brighten, the sun goes higher, salvation is nearing, the Desire cometh. . . . But the wind wailed, and the waves thundered, and the sun sank, and the heaven was darkened above me.

## THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

## Book II.

I Residence at one of the British Universities (let me say Oxford) immediately followed the journey which, in a single main element, had raised my thoughts to a level worthier manhood. By the pages preceding, the writer has given proof that he does not hold a child's love in itself merely childish, far less deserving of the ridicule it meets often from critics whose own true capacity for passion, a gift not universal, may be justly doubted. The derision of a whole insulting world, to me at least, would be silenced before remembrance of the lifelong fascination and empire exerted by this phase of feeling (not to seek more distant and romantic examples) over some of Europe's manliest men; of the transports of Dante, of the agonies of Byron. Those who laugh here will be shallow in their best seriousness, and with such I hold no argument. Yet there is a truth in such contempt; this love must lie within the limitations of the immature mind—must partake in what Wordsworth would almost authorize me to call childhood's more perfect, while evanescent, imperfection. There is ignorance in its purity, in its abandonment, even in its constancy. We have not experienced the



stings of the Sense, are not capable of reserve, cannot even for an instant then conceive that the world and friends and the vital power itself by which we love, will one day, after many, set themselves against fidelity. A sure gain, I therefore judge it, that now (to borrow Goethe's exquisite line) the interspace 'from Zuleika to Zuleika', was no longer the limit of my desire and of my retrospection; that the world without began to work on the world within me; that Hope and Fear were added to Delight, to render it henceforth more delightful. This was a true step forwards. But it shall not be concealed that my mind's advance was not in all ways, or in many ways, commensurate. Backward in childhood I expect I was—certainly in youth. God had appointed me six years of happiness from the period now reached; but although not I trust utterly barren, the first three bore little fruit worthy garnering. Why this was so, how the soul gained strength by simple submission to Nature and the voice of living friends, and those (hardly less living) who spoke from Greece and Italy and other lands; how Studies passed into Thought, and Thought, daily more sadly serious, found a far more than compensating beatitude in the all-in-all of Désirée's dear presence,—I, believing that the sincere avowal of one soul's struggles is not impertinent or valueless, aim now at narrating.

II If the narrator profited little by this earlier half of his university life (and friends and tutors might, he regrets to know, illustrate, confirm, and enforce the statement), assuredly it was not from any scantiness in the favours of time and circumstance. A member of the dominant college, and this, (by common confession) at once in respect of students and of instructors, exercised already in mind and

body by the splendid English Public School Education, myself not within some interest and capacity for ennobling study, conscious that to success here I must look for prosperity in life,—preserving to the full, and (without weak shame I may add) in main points anxious to follow the warm religious faith implanted through the many forgotten hours of childhood by the unwearied wisdom of a dear mother's affection ;—and, to crown all, God's gift even more absolutely, the passion of love the most unswerving for one so pure and so noble that she seemed sent down for my desire, leading-star, and reward, from her birth-place in some heaven above the heavens :—thus circumstanced, why were my first steps in University existence feeble and uncertain ? Perhaps even the sense of life, the joy of friendship, the exultation of physical sport,—the river for boats and bathing, the foot-ball field, the open heath, rides and running excursions, air and water, waste and weald, the rejoicing in what seemed insuperable strength, the spirits we too slightly name ' animal ', so far, at least, as these delights rendered the Present all-sufficing,—certainly the varied character of that rich new scene, the many careers open, the thousand opinions, the vanity of youth, the childishness of distracted judgment, were elements of retardation, powerful and almost inevitable, to the immediate growth of the soul. Every prejudice could find an abettor amongst our equals : and I might despise Wordsworth (not to touch here on deeper matters), and express ignorant horror when one who more truly discerned the spirits ranked Lucretius above Virgil, or spoke of Goethe with reverence, not only safely, but triumphantly. For time was required, before the just decisions of the few could arise in strength and prove their

duration amongst the fancies of the crowd who shared each other's follies, or applauded them. Thus at first every preformed opinion gained force from that enlarged intercourse with men which should have corrected it. I despised and censured at will and random : I prided myself on narrowness of mind, when so many friendly hearts, the bright, the good, and the thoughtful, were satisfied to be narrow with me : I submitted with alacrity to other claims from authority than the one authority of truth. Meanwhile, by a strange and concealed contrast, college studies silently filled the mind with what I may venture to call the brute material of ideas, the inert and seemingly lifeless seeds of an inner life, absolutely irreconcilable with the judgments consciously formed and enunciated with the petulant arrogance of dogmatic youth. Little by little also, (a change perhaps more important yet in human life), the larger-hearted friends began to draw me in my folly towards them, compel me with wise love to audience of the manlier music, the more spiritual utterances I had heard at first, and derided. Strangers visit that city and walk the windings of the glorious street, and esteem it a metropolis of warmth and fertility and blooming youth, and all faults the excess of a life too exuberant ; but to the wiser educators how often must Oxford seem a chilling waste wilderness, where their voice sounds unechoed ; where the bread they give becomes a stone in the receiver's hand, to be cast, perhaps, finally, at the Socrates of the day for mockery or martyrdom ! If they felt thus, I was one of the guilty then.

III Often, as I afterwards saw the young arrivals, light of step and swift of motion, at once rash and confiding, each in his turn appeared to me like one who from a high

cliff, and after run and leap, and eyes closed, plunges into an unknown sea, and whether he can swim or not is unknown also until after trial : until he *has* in fact sunk, or succeeded. It is a blindness pathetic indeed, yet inseparable from any vital act of progress. Practice and theory alike derive no genuine gain from experience or wisdom whilst external to our soul's soul ; mere information is no true teacher. We get knowledge by assimilation only of what we know, and learn life by living. Thus during any period specifically devoted, as college residence, to education, the materials gathered may easily overpass the student's own capacity : may exceed absorption into our intellectual being. A conflict, already alluded to, then arises : we form precipitate conclusions on the new knowledge, or cling with passion to the standing framework of our opinions ; and the tongue speaks and the heart believes, what in the innermost soul is perhaps unconsciously discredited. The new faith springs ' like a covered fire ' within the sanctuary of the existing ; an old historical cycle repeats itself ; national developments are mirrored in individual ; the ' vile superstition ' of Tiberius proves the creed of Constantine. When describing the revolution gradually worked in my thoughts, it will be fit to venture a few words on the moral aspect and on the absolute value of such changes. Here it is enough to add that the study of Thucydides, Tacitus, and ancient philosophy, stored up lessons leading finally to results alien far from the expectation of the tutors to whose side I was then attached. But, ignorant of those consequences, I walked still in blind confidence of a knowledge falsely so esteemed. Nor, when placed under one gifted beyond most men with courage and clear insight, for instruc-

tion in the pure sciences, were any avenues into truth beyond their own sphere opened : for void, to use scientific terms, of all content, it is at once their glory and their defect that no reality (if matter be reality), no reference to the sensible world interrupt the calm circle of immutable and irresistible demonstration. Such knowledge is truly its own and amply sufficient reward. But from logic, treated not as a verbal system of deduction, but as the theory at once and the method of all strict thinking, I gained the first insight, however dim, into those ultimate points of human consciousness on which the whole array of opinion rests : into what, with the profoundest sense of its limitations, in quality and in degree, must yet be called—there is at least none beyond—ultimate truth. Vivified as he was by the same eloquent and accurate thinker, after more than twenty centuries Aristotle now fulfilled, or seemed to fulfil, the promise of his work, and supplied a young English student with a living method in mind,—an *Organ* of thinking.

IV But although this first introduction to thought upon thought came on me, I remember, with a mighty surprise, a shock and a blind sense of expression (it was summer, and the days seemed brighter than their wont, the sunbeams of more than common vivacity),—it was to other books than those strictly studied, to two writers of our own land especially, that during the latter portion of these three years I look back and am thankful for immediate and almost tangible blessing. Readers will see, perhaps with a smile, that my own wilfulness only had blinded me to sources of delight hardly more distant than sun and air, or the common aspects of Nature. But even this obtuseness, I think, gave me no claim to originality. Strange it is to take down, many others

have probably experienced, to take down at last by chance and open some volume, and find that within our own possession treasures of majesty and music, counsels of heroic wisdom set to perfect words, have been long silently laid up for us within the compass of a few narrow pages, and we knew it not ! It is a common remark, that by the chain of some trivial habit, some mere conventionality, man is often hampered for years from performance of a novel but obvious duty : something which when done at last, we wonder we had not the courage to do years previously. I think it is so not less frequently with the circumstances of our inward life. A veil rends, a prejudice drops, a foolish criticism is forgotten, a foolish jest has grown flat : *sensit puer, salva res est* ; and the soul, in one happy and memorable half-hour landing in sunshine on a new world, like Columbus and his followers in Turner's exquisite design, sets up the banner of exultant discovery, and takes seisin of her golden inheritance. Then how the birds in the great strange trees are of unlooked-for lustre in plumage and wealth in song, 'larger constellations burning', and sunsets of dye and delicacy we never thought could have trembled in flame below the zenith ! Not less than such visions I now enjoyed, sitting low over the fire in a dark upper room, or the deep window recesses of our ancient walls in summer sunlight alone, or friends talking blithely by, in these first sympathetic readings of Milton and of Tennyson : names I conjoin with a special pleasure, from the thought that amongst all the holy poets these two are the most absolute masters of English speech, and of the reverent and almost personal affection borne Milton by the younger brother. What I have given here, or attempted, is the pure general impression

following acquaintance with the 'Paradise', 'Comus', 'Samson', and the two volumes which were the Tennyson of the time : an impression (let me hasten to add) not only confirmed since and deepened by reflection, but unabated of the glory of its original freshness. These works, like God's (and themselves surely God's also) are, in Goethe's splendid language, perfect to me still as on the first day. Indeed the sweetness of the years of hope and Désirée will sometimes, as I read them, 'flash along the lines and go' : in the verses that added delight to delight, something arises yet which not altogether counterfeits consolation. But these are a fairy treasure of my own ; I will not run the risk of loss by naming them. And I should refrain, even were this result impossible, in pages written not for criticism, but Désirée.

V To my confession of confused thoughts, weak aims, and wasted hours, I should add that the pure love of Nature, partly from the pressure of these new experiences in human life, partly from the notorious want of any conspicuous charm in the surrounding country, in part from a cause (presently to be noticed) which during this period disinclined me from travelling, gained also no sensible advance. Except indeed by force of the vague pleasure any contemplation of our own youth gives, as the thought of Spring in December, and what secretly underlies that pleasure, remembrance of so many bright faces, and whole days spent between friend and friend,—that now faint and feeble horizon of college residence would be to the writer no alluring retrospect. The predominance of Love, which, like that 'sky-climbing star, the sun's white-winged herald', gave a certain promise of day, a manly aspiration and unity

to so much else poor and aimless, is the one feature that redeems it into any ideal beauty. Existence was now too varied and vivacious, the warmth and delight of friendship too satisfying, to suggest such contrasts as I have noted during my school-days, or at least to render them a source of special enjoyment : but I may say with truth, the flower and first fruits of this new life were holy to Her. How often I broke away from joyous expedition, or bright society, from Philosopher and Poet, to be more with the thought of Désirée ! How many little fragments of the surrounding landscape, copses by the slow-creeping streams, bare hill-sides, green undulations of heath, even dusty high-roads, and the very angles of the way, still, as I have since seen, or remembered them, recall the sweetness of that one image ! How often this thought supplied ardour to study, or refreshment to fatigue ! . . . How often (but that not *so* often) praised for any work by the dear dear Friend who wasted precious hours in attempt to raise faint faculties to the level of his own large and subtle comprehension, I recorded the triumph, with the prayer that this might be one step more in elevating me to worthiness of her ! How always I lay down to sleep in absolute confidence of God's loving-kindness, the sweet fearless assurance that what so many thousand times I had asked in a Heaven-compelling Name, He would give me ; trusting all to Him, He would give me my heart's desire, knowing He would never leave or forsake me, that He had promised—and this anguish the fulfilment. . . . *Deus, Deus meus, quare me dereliquisti ?*

VI Heaven and earth, I thought then, would rather pass away than that word fail (the text on the fulfilment of which Arnold, a man blessed with more than common happiness,



almost founded his faith), *Whatsoever ye ask*. . . . The writer would be untrue to truth, did he not record the defeat of Faith : but, again, he would not dare record it, had he not in the strictest sense enjoyed entire Faith once, reliance the most childly and reposing on the answers of an all-gracious Providence. Every evening at my own home I heard a voice loved and venerated, for the final blessing of the day, read texts rich in those promises :

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him,  
 Yea, all such as call upon him faithfully ;  
 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him,  
 He also will hear their cry, and will help them.  
 Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in him,  
 And he shall bring it to pass :  
 Delight thou in the Lord,  
 And he shall give thee thy heart's desire.

As I listened to such words, I might almost say with a great Christian, ' Their glory was then so weighty on me, ' that I was both once and twice ready to swoon as I sat ; ' yet not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and ' peace ' ; and, going to my own room, hours went by,—often till a summer's dawning broadened over the landscape (and if this deserve scorn, I take it gladly) in a thousand prayers for all blessings known to me or unknown to Désirée, for the grace which should make the suppliant worthy of her, for the hope of life. Nor were these exercises of faith narrowed to leisure or silent hours : such thoughts were my litany at every turning-point, everything begun or ended throughout the day. The college routine of chapel attendance, judged of by Wordsworth in the ' Prelude ' as most thinking men will judge it, was then to

me, bound in this passionate superstition, one happy privilege more, an hour set aside by a holy consecration to summon up the thoughts of Love 'in her own native place,' to be in closer communion with Désirée :—as the organ in its loftiest thunders shook 'the prophets blazon'd on the 'panes,' to speak her name aloud ; to intercalate it in every supplication of the Liturgy. When I add, with truth I may, that an earnest endeavour to carry the precepts of the faith into daily life, and some success, some faults the fewer, some sturdier activity in facing labour and amusement, some penitential renunciation of sin accompanied them, need I further add, that the boy never doubted the efficacy of his prayers ?—prayers, he thought, inscribed surely on some purple pages, and laid up within the archives of Heaven.

VII But the answer was not to be yet. When it came, and *then* after God's fearful irony, by years more granted for deeper appreciation of that dear one, had poisoned the loss with a tenfold bitterness, was I to be blamed, if unable not to give this contradiction between express promise and utter unfulfilment its only name ? 'That a million prayers, and no prayers should bring the same result, is it not sad ? If individual experiences are with justice allowed weighty to prove the truth of supernatural mercy, if men appeal to the blessings they enjoy, the things Heaven has done for them, can experiences absolutely opposite be without weight also ? I hear the sophist's shallow murmur 'apparent contradiction' ; I know the answers that many who have not undergone such trial, and some who have, will bring forward with triumphant readiness : they shall be hereafter considered : one only I meet here with a denial the most

forcible I can find words for. That which God for whatever inscrutable purposes withheld, counted high amongst His highest blessings. *There* lies the bitterness past death, the irremediable calamity. It is truly not the lost Faith I mourn, but the lost Darling. With humble uncertainty on the mysteries I rest satisfied : but the many desolate years have given me large opportunity to judge, and this in circumstances which might well leave the mind free for dispassionate judgment, that in my honoured Désirée I should have gained all that the reason can most calmly prize, or the heart most fondly long for. Tears of blood, were such possible, would faintly render the pain of this confession : for one who in the annals of revelation, even most literally interpreted, in the presages of Nature can read no authentic promise that personal recognition, renewal of human sympathies, are amongst the blessings of the most highly blessed eternity, it is to own I have lost the great treasure of existence for ever. Such she had now become. For during that tardy and imperfect advance of mine, the process of nineteen seasons had carried Désirée harmoniously forward many steps towards an excellence seldom perhaps appreciated, seldom attained. Of what she had been hitherto, I, thinking a child's judgment on a child of slight value, have said little : *any* picture I can draw, will of course be inefficient ; yet I must. I take her guardian angel to witness for the sincerity of my words : the praise others may naturally misesteem as partiality, will to him appear beneath her deserts ; he knows that if I loved his nurseling too well, yet that to love Désirée was in itself to love wisely.

VIII And yet the character I have to describe in some degree fell short, far short, it may be, of perfection ; nor

were the faults such as, perhaps for the grace and compliment of saying it, men say often, endear any dear one more. The phrase is pretty, but even applied to others, it has never seemed to me quite sincere ; much less would I have borne to think so slightly of Désirée as not to wish her in every conjuncture and circumstance ' wisest, virtuous, discreetest, best ' ; and, O ! without one touch of dread that she could thus become less humanly dear. . . . That I gave her so many years of love, all that made life life, and in vain should I, I have heard it so estimated, count *this* a fault ? Did I err in holding her capacity of affection not less than her rich inheritance of other gifts ? O no ; blind with vanity should I be to judge thus ; yet, open-hearted and trustful as she was with all, and attracted specially always by what seemed brave and open, often I wished her less credulous of superficial heroism, a little more willing to accept simple affection, a little more conscientious in discrimination between friend and friend—between those she amused, and those to whom she was all in all. I have seen her too self-reliant from pure unconsciousness of self ; too hastily censorious from the rebound, as it were, of her own frank submission to censure ; for there is (and this perhaps was such) a selfishness which springs from the very root of unselfishness.

Who keeps a spirit wholly true  
To that ideal which he bears ?

I could judge Désirée by no standard less than Désirée ; the high nature, frank heart, clear reason, pure aspiration : —God had, in creating, laid upon this fair child the noble duty (and to so few has He allotted capacity even approximately sufficient, that except for one like her it can hardly

be held a woman's duty)—in all things to seek and hold fundamental truth : never be swayed by friendship, or custom, or authority against the decisions of the larger, and, if I may so say, the heroic conscience : to leave no veil between herself and what was so near her, the illuminating Spirit. If at times she declined from this arduous ideal, could I not regret ? It is want of courage and imagination which in popular estimate renders ideal perfection distasteful : nothing, I thought, would be too high for Désirée. To her capable mind, again, it was unjust that delight in society, fancy, or indolence, should deny any rightful and serious study, any light from honourable knowledge. The worst injustice is self-injustice ; and here, I have often thought, was a little. Perhaps, as one too happy in her happiness—perhaps, from a native independence of soul so strong that it measured all by her own ‘ holy simplicity,’ she, forgetful always of herself, could be, or seem, in little things forgetful of others ; too confident of love to care for the expression of sympathy ; inclined to slight *all* slights ; and less willing to confess the error of to-day than to efface it by a thousand gracious words and deeds of thoughtful kindness to-morrow. This dear dear creature, in a word, was blessed so largely with God's rarest gift of nobleness, that, in the warmth and flush of girlhood, if she erred, it was from a transitory stress of overflowing nature. When I heard her misjudged or blamed by any others, her faults, even acknowledged, arose (I thought) from an excellence beyond their appreciation. And if at such moments it was not in nature to resist the delight of defending Désirée, immediately I regretted I had not, with Dante, ‘ held my ‘ peace, and let the world say its will ’ ; satisfied to the full

with my own truer estimate of her worth, and holding her far too dear to care to bias others in her favour.

IX Far indeed was Désirée from over-care, from any care almost for her judgment by general acquaintances, those who knew her, and no more ; in a word, by the world, as I take the term ordinarily to signify. But that any could see her and not judge her truly, often at first surprized me. For hers, as with all great souls, was a character graced by an exquisite unity : ‘ all thoughts, all passions, all delights ’ in her flowed from that predominating nobleness. From the first glance of those violet eyes to the last, lighted up though they might be with all our human variety of feeling, this confession at least I never failed to read there ; the emanations of this glorious quality were clear in every act and word and gesture. She was so much Nature’s immediate heiress, that she could do nothing except large-heartedly. As I looked at her in society and compared her with others, she seemed a creature born in some earlier and more heroic world, before failings reputed womanly, affectation, vanity, caprice, timidity, had any being. Many men, even a judge penetrating as Thackeray for instance, have held these qualities (when perhaps subtly modified) graceful and attractive. But in Désirée I thanked God often that I knew one from any taint of littleness absolutely free, yet for this very reason more perfect yet in the charms of the most winning and gracious girlishness. When through the larger intercourse of these years my knowledge of her mind was deepened and I learned to look on Désirée not as in the hour of thoughtless boyhood, that great change was wrought on me which Wordsworth by process of the seasons experienced in his communion with Nature. Her presence, in-

spiring hitherto a pure delightful passion, disturbed me now with 'the joy of elevated thought'; with a sense of a Divinity interfused in that fair child; 'something that was 'before the elements, and owing no homage to the sun'. Like Dante when his regained Beatrice led him up to the beatific vision, alone with Darling I was translated into a loftier heaven, where desire to human aspiration added the angel wings of hope, and the purple glow of passion whitened to a more intense and celestial ardency, a region where every hour was a portion of eternity, trust in her was implicit faith, and reverence for her pure religion; where I adored 'Madonna' without idolatry, and loved God in loving Désirée.

X Nor had He, again, left this crowning grace, this so much his own privilege of nobleness unaccompanied by gifts scarcely separable from it; high truth, ingenuous confidence: man's love of justice with woman's sympathy for the injured: a frankness innocent of disguise, and an innocence which needed no disguisal. Even if not realized and embodied in one dear from childhood, these qualities would have rendered her presence delightful; and with how many other, what contrasting charms, they were united! As, during these years, by accidentally prolonged residence in London I was with Désirée often in the familiar house, whilst the roar of the great city throbbed around and in upon us at every pause, or during the autumnal visit which had now superseded my foreign wanderings, for days with her in her parents' summer-dwelling in sweet seaside places,—if deepening sympathy for one did not, by a happy law of nature, enlarge the general power of sympathy,—surely the comparison of what she was with almost any others would

have rendered me morosely unfit for common society, weary even amongst friends the most dearly valued. But, far from this, friends never seemed so brilliant as when I met them with Désirée. At the farewell, I felt as one who has walked with angels ; like Michelangelo Buonarroti when he left his highly honoured Vittoria, ' my thoughts appeared ' to have been born within her heart, my words created by ' her intelligence '. Although smiling at my own folly, Wordsworth's fatal line ' the dreary intercourse of daily ' life ', (fatal, because to so many these discouraging words must have gone home with the irresistible force of a revelation) often expressed only too well my feelings, when the ride ended, or the boat touched land, or the final summons for parting banished me from the high and plenteous wit and invention, the affectionate all-confidingness, the lavish laughter and lucid smiles of this ' most replenished sweet ' work of nature ' to a world where, in the great exile's phrase, the bread tasted salt, and the beloved I had left was prized ' *più caramente* '. But then by plenitude of passion almost more present with Désirée when absent, this desideration led me only to anticipate the day when next, like the poet, I should come forth and revisit the starry circles of my paradise . . . one unbroken ascent by her guidance to the Empyrean, to the ' *vita intera d'amore e di pace* '—So I triumphed ; and my Ravenna was lying hidden beyond, and the dark downward pilgrimage, and the grave away from Beatrice.

XI The features hitherto noticed in this fair soul are traceable mainly to that eminent nobleness which was, I suppose, what with the profoundest charm and most fondly bound me to Désirée. In the words of a great master,



‘maestro di color che sanno’, this gift adorns all excellences, and all excellences accompany it. Thus my portrait is but half sketched. In truth, however comprehensive, no single word can ever resume character ; simple perhaps in itself, a character becomes complex in manifestation ; and graces flowing from one source, thrown into opposing lights through circumstance, by contrast are made more graceful. My surprise that I did not see her uniformly by all comprehended was irrational. ‘We are apt to judge extraordinary men by our own standard’, a great thinker (delineating himself with Désirée in the words italicized) remarks, ‘that is to say, we often suppose them to possess, in an extraordinary degree, the qualities we are conscious of in ourselves or others. This is the easiest way of conceiving their characters, but not the truest. They differ in kind rather than in degree. Even to understand them truly seems to require a power analogous to their own. *Their natures are more subtle and yet more simple, than we readily imagine.* We marvel how such various traits of character come together in the same individual’. I, of course, can claim no such ‘analogous power’ ; and yet if I had failed to read Désirée’s mind truly it would have been a more than common blindness. It is possible that from that dear and fatal prerogative of intimacy, from the long watchfulness of affection, I knew her better than myself. Not only had she, almost since I could hold myself capable of memory, laid her thoughts before me with fearless and sisterly affection, but from the same unreserve of intercourse, I had seen her tried, seen her triumphant in almost every ordeal to which (within unromantic limits indeed, yet inclusive of trials beyond most romance) an English maiden could be

subjected :—to blame, flattery, pleasure, wealth, bereavement : danger, bodily and mental ; to perplexing choice, to the necessity for independent action in hours of peril and temptation. I had seen her disarm censure by frank confession : flatterers, by the security of self-forgetfulness : pleasure, by healthy acceptance and temperate refusal : wealth, by valuing it as aid to others, and indifference the most absolute as regarded herself : bereavement, by bravery of heart, and purity of faith, and devotedness of affection. Désirée confronted danger with a smile, and defeated it ; her courage gained a charm almost ineffably pathetic from union with tender and girlish grace,—from that perfect unconsciousness which, when blithe and laughing where her companions (I have felt it) trembled for her in every limb, made her call herself a coward.

With this exquisite sincerity Désirée was in fact equal to all things : at home with high or low, dull or brilliant, friend or stranger, eager alike for mirth and study : good for philosophy and for household ways, ' for service ', as Aristotle observes of the large-hearted, ' or for command ', for wildness and for method : so prettily engaging and simple-souled with children that one wished oneself a child, or again so bright and so weighty in judgment that she seemed greatest always with the great, and met on even terms the wittiest and the wisest : never too grave for gaiety, and her smiles at no time far from seriousness. And this great gift was hers also, that by individual right she preserved through every phase a unity unimpaired, not only with herself as at the moment she might be, but with herself as I remember her through twenty years : the glory of her infancy undiminished, and the records of the

sweet face at one with its promises :—never childish, yet never not a child, the broad seal of heaven on her brows, and God always with her Darling.

XII What I have here noted together, using many words and saying little, was in fact of gradual discovery : felt only as a source of blind organic sympathy during childhood ; hardly perhaps recognized in fulness before my own portion was in outer darkness. But when enjoying almost daily the privilege *πλάσιον ἂν φωνείσας ὑτακούειν καὶ γελαίσας ἰμεζόειν*, I became aware of her worthihood, henceforth I stood towards Désirée in a double relation of subtle sweetness ; a union of Fear with Triumph. When in any game or society she chose me her companion, accepted my gifts, promised some treasure of her own hands' work, and when seemingly forgotten, gave it ; when she bade me share her own thoughtful plans for good, aided me with counsel, or, dearer still, in doubt or anxiety, asked mine ; in all from her pure truthfulness, with no further looking intention, or any thought beyond the favour of the moment, I triumphed in the force of Faith ; I was as one having nothing, and yet possessing all things. If they appeared symbolical of the larger issues of life, events however trivial obtained in my fancy an incommensurate and ideal importance, and words light as air came back upon me with an oracular reverberation. If she said ' we ', it was enough. Once when at the closing dance of a ball I, carrying her off from many rivals, led Désirée hand in hand, ' we two ' in Homer's hearty phrase ' going together ' through the final arch of interwoven arms, final, for the music then ceased ;—I thought I had waged a ' just war ', that a thanksgiving and triumph had been decreed me ; I could have summoned

lictors and chariot to convoy me along the Sacred Way, I could have cried to the Pontifex, Crown me in the Capitol. After many years I can recall that evening yet,

Le perle, e le ghirlande, e i panni allegri,  
E 'l riso, e 'l canto, e 'l parlar dolce umano.

I see the glitter and the glow of the scene, the undulation and bridal brightness of the dancers ; a vague vision of Désirée. But ' there is this misery in affection, that whom ' we truly love like ourselves, we forget their looks, nor can ' our memory retain the idea of their countenances ' : a cloud hangs *there*, and I may not see her : the cloud that gathers over faces too dearly loved, and gazed on too much ; lost too utterly, and mourned for too despairingly . . . Thus I cannot dwell here on the fairness of that outward temple, so truly answerable to its dear and immortal inhabitant, the countenance that spoke her passions with such ' eloquent blood ', that I often thought the community more than commonly complete in Désirée between Spirit and Body :

It seem'd a through-light scarf her mind t'enroll,  
Or exhalation breathed out from her soul :

—I have indeed described both in one, if at all successful in my description.

XIII If the triumph just recorded appears trivial, not so the fear of which that exultation as it were was the counterpart. Nothing on earth is so great, says a Master, as the reverence inspired by love. Such was that Fear in its first and highest essence ; arising from no puerile comparison of myself with Désirée, not from any terrors of possible rivalry, but only, and no meaner idea intervening, from knowledge what she was, from her own dear self and ex-

ceeding preciousness. The first time I ventured in my journal, after a day marked there as holy to remembrance and to which memory is only too faithful, to accompany her name with the word '*dear*', it is written tremulously : it was as if she had heard me : the silent act seemed a startling confession,—one step to realizing a hope which, with evenly balanced energy, alarmed and allured me the more, the more I began to comprehend the meaning and contemplate the possibility of its realization. O with what heart-silencing awe, what tumultuous exultation along the blood, was that first mental union of the syllables Wife and Désirée ! No longer with the shouts of boyhood, nor in foreign regions, by the sands of Bayonne and Sorrento, the rocks of Arona and Meillerie, but I could now only whisper the '*sorrise parolette brevi*' and to the English sea, answering with an innumerable low laughter of shoreward waves, and carrying the holy secret to Désirée as it kissed the garden terrace beneath her feet with murmurs of confession. Deeper henceforward was the colour, wider the range of passion : like the final conception of perfect method in philosophy, it identified opposites into a higher truth,—became more Actual at once and more Ideal : holier, and homelier. I could look at the Desired no longer with that first love

That had no need of a remoter charm  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye :

—but with present resolve, and eager earnest anticipation ; with the longings for settled peace ; with the hope for blessings which, obtained, would, I knew, be beyond any hope. ' A voice called to me from the years to come ' :—I

recognized that this young playmate must be the one aim of life, my all in all, and the conditions of the struggle death or victory : I looked on the bright face with honour and reverence unspeakable : I saw the angel in the child, until often I could look no longer. . . . Then, leaving Désirée, I repeated aloud the deeply-felt Spanish motto *Ahora y siempre*, or a text written on every page of the calendar which records the great festivals of the heart ' In ' quietness and confidence shall be thy strength '. Or sometimes, going to the grey village church, where in one window the family crest of some ancient benefactor was emblazoned, with anxious eyes I read and read again the legend written beneath. This was, PACEM ORO : 1444 :— whose device I have never known, but his prayer has been long accomplished.

XIV Had it held no other elements than great Hope and a great Reverence, this Fear would have been truly consistent with a perfect, a consummated affection. But throughout these six years (to the latter portion of which I now pass), no meeting went by without another sense of fear : without increase in that exigency for confession, first, as I have noticed, definitely felt whilst I was beneath one roof with Désirée at the ' Tesoretto '. At the close of days passed as so many now were within some seaside familiar Eden, or the house which had been my second home since childhood, long days, and each day pure happiness, often I asked myself, Was it right to let the ' creeping hours ' go by in this unremitted reserve ? Should I not have trusted passion to words ? An old friend once, no doubt seeing my fondness, praised her warmly to me. For an instant it seemed desirable to confess, to ask her

counsel ; but I answered nothing to the purpose, satisfied with this thought alone—Guilty of what other ever follies, here at least I had secured the one great acknowledged blessing. A natural reluctance had restrained me from divulging to others, even dearest friends, a hope so tender and so vital to life that the voice within the heart hardly dared utter it ; and although aware that others could not but know something, proud at times to know they knew it, yet by force of my own silence the secret seemed still my own. How should I discover the truth ? We may see through coquetry and dissimulation : a warm, straightforward heart is inscrutable. I watched every indication with the peculiar blindness and lucid insight of passionate devotion : I inquired anxiously whether the long familiarity which permitted such open intercourse, such equal and unrestrained exchange of friendship, might not have rendered Désirée unconscious what she was to him she met always with that unswerving sisterly affection. And in truth, the more secure I felt of this great blessing, the more I feared the bare chance of losing all, or to take my fate into my own hasty hands—the more trusted to God that sweet silent growth of love, sure to shape some perfect end, so Reason, Experience, and Faith assured me, in due season. ‘ Away with curious forequestioning,—what will be, will be’.

*τὸ προκλύειν, ἐπεὶ γένοιτ' ἂν ἡλυσίς, προχαιρέτω.*

Was it indeed cowardice to wait thus, or that larger courage to which the acts of premature daring themselves appear but another cowardice disguised ? Time taught me a deep answer ; reserve was right ; the dear one unconscious ; the end would have been alike. Every hour of delay,

though I knew it not, was saved from the eternal sorrow.

XV Strong in this quietness and confidence in the great hope of life, when at the third summer's conclusion I returned to the University, unexpected war springing up suddenly within my heart, with distrust and alarm, shook much I had hitherto peaceably and unwaveringly confided in. This, which as the first mental revolution, surprized and terrified me then, I look at now of course without wonder. A single law of central agency may control the ebb and flow, but there is not one tide only in the affairs of men ; most, I should imagine, can or could point out several crises, more or less decisive of the direction their inner life has taken. Such changes are matter not for regret, acquiescence, or triumph, but for earnest reflection. Inevitable in themselves, and when accomplished, eversive often apparently of the entire life preceding, they are in truth moments only in our existence ;—like the vast telluric revolutions of nature, from afar and secretly prepared by a thousand causes, outward and internal :—position in space, intersection of our orbit by other planets, enfeebled heat in heaven, more forcible gravitation sunwards, by central fires, glacial action, prolonged repose ; by that Will, lastly, which is without such analogy as I have indicated to the organic forces of the universe, moulding the microcosm Man. They pass, and we perhaps find ourselves less changed than we believed or desired. Much will always remain in this last and strangest mystery, our own selves, inexplicable, governed by powers we cannot control, and beyond human consciousness. Yet self-analysis on the points just indicated is to a certain extent possible ; and



although a process unpopular from causes beyond examination in these pages, at the present day, may be turned I think to real and lasting advantage. Here, at least, if anywhere, self-knowledge appears to me a simple duty ; to ask how we became what we are, that in this irrestrainable flux of Being, we may master the moment next to be and direct it to worthier issues. The writer has expressed already his belief that the faithful record of such an examination may be not without use to others ; the soul's unity renders it a needful scene in the true picture of passion : but he plans to touch only on the main features, desirous to give conclusions of thought rather than processes in pages which, although by necessity egotistic, are intended at least as an autobiography of the dearer self in self,—a confession and a monument to *Désirée*.

XVI Why, however, was it that one distinguishable point in my University life is marked out by memory as the commencement of a great change, an initiation into the mysteries ? Were any chains of authority or habit now first loosened ? Had I fallen beneath the power of some mighty destructive thinker till then unheard, or heard of only with terror ? Had some sad internal experience, casual intercourse with friends of a new order, conversance with the world and practical things, shaken youthful convictions ? Was I, lastly, influenced by some pervading sin, by passion for paradox, pride, vanity, or recklessness ? I desire to extenuate nothing in myself ; nor, again, to set down anything in malice. Man may not, indeed, claim as his own or as self-originated, what portion of the good, in motive or in aim, he possesses ; but I do not judge it right, —rather it is right not to deny what of this better nature

existed within me, in the exercise of that sophistical humility which, although often proclaimed Christian, can hardly be acceptable to the Divine Truth. In this change, then, viewed thus, I see no ground for self-accusation. It was not speculative only, but influential through the whole sphere of practical life and of moral judgment : yet it arose from no discontent with the limitations set by conscience,—led to no infractions of ethical ordinance. It was accompanied, again, by deferential study and colligation of opinions received now or in former ages : by hours of bitter humiliation, scorn from neighbours, years of research and reflection which, if success in pursuing truth were proportionate to anxious eagerness in the pursuit, might have authorized hopes which the reader himself cannot think more baseless than I. No bitter experience, no sorrow or joy subversive to the mind's central calm, not even the sympathy or the example of friends, no single teacher (with one exception I shall presently notice) by written word or speech, not in any great degree, external events in the words' rigorous significance,—taught me with relation to many treasured convictions, many despised thoughts, the bitter salutary lesson of the converted king, '*incendere quod adoraveram, adorare quod incenderam*'. By process of the seasons rather I was led to this result ; by sights of common life, by voices from the foolish and the wise of many lands, by the voice within the heart, finally,—constraining me with an irresistible command, deaf alike to pride and to humility, indifferent to pain and careless of conclusions, to inquire how, in the fullest extent of the phrase, these things might be.

XVII The expressions above employed are strictly pro-

portionate to the importance of the fact to my own soul : not, if they appear magniloquent, to any greatness in the change itself, or to any conclusions which I am justified in thinking of absolute value. I have, of course, only what ' has been, and may be again ',—nothing new, no discovered *arcanum* to boast of. The change was a modification in the method of thought rather than in the results ; to take with a wider meaning an admirable expression from Whewell, it might be defined a deep and permanent sense of the Fundamental Antitheses of Philosophy. Or, using words far less lucid and pregnant, but (I fear) likely to be far more generally intelligible, I might say an ever-strengthening conviction of the infinite mysteriousness of all things was henceforward with me : that increase of knowledge, experience, and reflection led the mind on to a confession of ignorance, at each new augmentation the more profound and the more humbling.

XVIII A notice of the studies and of the thoughts which were the main successive elements in framing this conviction—the only new and real event during several years of earlier manhood—may make my meaning clearer. Some teaching came indeed from the world without, but rather corroborative of changes in the world within the soul, than affecting it with any new impulses. Of such events one here deserves special commemoration. For within my own University I saw the system of religious doctrine (I do not name it, because I can only name it by appellations more than commonly connotative of party bitterness) devised by two or three subtle minds, and followed by many devout and serious, shaken so deeply, that those who left, and those who opposed it, raised shouts of ungraceful derision

over a catastrophe by which, however, that system was rather modified, the event has shown, than ruined. Before the revolution alluded to, these opinions, resting on scholastic and archaeological arguments so triumphantly announced, that it was difficult to believe them baseless, had with myself lost the prestige of authority ; I was not personally touched by the crisis ;—yet, beside the personal regret roused by the sight of many dear friends' perplexity, by the miserable outcries of angry theologians, by farewells at last of peculiar sadness, this disruption afforded two lessons equally affecting, although of opposite nature ; operative respectively, I might say, in the direction of Scepticism and of Conviction. Making full allowance for what portion in this remarkable controversy was merely verbal, it was impossible not to recognize that on points which from any and every view of Christian theology are truly essential, an uncertainty existed, so great that men who had not only with entire faith maintained, but throughout lives of eminently consistent goodness had acted on one series of doctrines, could within the space not always of a few *months*, support conclusions rigorously opposite with equal belief and practical realization. In those of whom I am here speaking, the charge of conscious sophistry, advanced not by the ignorant alone, but by one conspicuous opponent in whom singular ability and goodness were tempered by an even less than average discrimination of human character, was untenable :—I may add, if true, it would have touched me far more slightly than the conclusion, absolute as any within the precincts of formal logic, that the almost ideally religious life which had accompanied the leaders from Canterbury to Rome, had not, according to

their own confession, whilst adhering to one at least of these ecclesiastical centres, saved them from a long course of acknowledged acted untruth on some, or many, or all (I am not curious here to measure the amount) of those doctrines to which they *ascribed* their whole moral direction. This conclusion was immediate : later reflection, with the signal defeat of the prophecy that the system as a rule of religious life would be henceforth annihilated, taught a less discomfutable lesson :—that system and logical consistency are not unattainable only, but unrequisite for safe guidance in action ; that through the deepest revolutions in dogmatic creed, honest hearts retain an inner life sufficient for the demands of outward practice—the natural theology of Conscience.

XIX It is an old saying, the traveller brings back from the journey what he took with him, and holds good of the pilgrimage we make into the regions of thought and study. We are apt to believe every famous book a fact, a sensible outward reality, a 'substantial world' ; a capital or a mountain district, if I may preserve the analogy of the traveller, where all comers will find the same peaks and palaces, beauty or sublimity. But this 'life-blood of some 'master spirit', (as philosophy affirms of the external world), has its visionary aspect ; is an indefinite spiritual force, and varies in intensity with the pre-existing capacities of the percipient mind. Every noble book, in a word, for better or for worse, is half re-written by the reader. Thus study is action also. We are apt, I think, to draw idle lines across the map of the soul, parting reason from sentiment, and contrasting practice with theory. But these opposites are ever passing into each other, and exist only by virtue

of their inseparable union. There is a sense in which thought is act, and act thought ; experience creates books : *abeunt studia in mores*. Accordantly with phases in my life, I can trace three forms or stages of study. The master-works I first read were identified with boyish opinions, and seen through the colours of personal passion ; they were measured (it is a confession due to Truth and to Folly) by my own standard, by an omnipresent immanence of self and of Désirée. During earlier college life I read almost without attempt at judgment ; more to gain conception of new realms, than to conquer or submit to the indwelling Spirits :—I was sustained in this course by the rivalry, criticism, and co-operation of friends, dazzled meanwhile by the glare of newly discovered suns, diverted also from bewilderment by heartsome pleasures and blithe activity. But now, lastly, studying the master-works more and more from their own point of view, they moulded mine ; justly enthroned in an opposite ‘house of the heavens’ to that which these stars held during boyhood, their influence carried me away from the littleness of self. And if the first effect was the perturbation of every predetermined opinion by the vast array of irreconcilable fact and reasoning presented on *all* opinions, books brought again for this general doubt a deeper and consoling ransom in another lesson, the sense of a great compensation, an even justice pervading all the ages. Nor was study without personal recompense :—Poet and philosopher giving freshness of life and new axioms of thought in return for fluctuations of dogma, and leading me ultimately forth of themselves into the world without, to compare Science with Reality. This aspect of study, I may further add, implied the attainment in a cer-

tain degree of unconscious mental sympathy with the writers' minds, that prepared me for reception of their conclusions. What, however, was it *then*, if experience confirmed these darker lessons, if nature answered in audible sighs, if mystery and disorder appeared paramount in the Kosmos, if the Preacher's text 'Vanity of vanities', proved more or less the confession, not of the wise only, but of the whole world his audience? Thankfulness and delight were at least my portion, whilst Désirée was my hope. I loved her now with the larger mind; and the passion, no longer fancifully prefigured in books and in Nature, took a greater depth by contrast—a blessedness above joy; a treasure with which nothing alien could intermeddle.

XX Scholars, if any turn these pages, may have wondered why, amongst the great writers of the early world powerful over the soul's development, I placed the name Heracleitus. How should the scanty relics of the noble Ephesian, mysterious and sad-like like broken words on gravestones, requiring (the ancients said) a 'Delian diver' to fathom them, and enigmatical even to a mind subtle as Aristotle's, so profoundly affect, and after twenty-two centuries, an English youth—that at the touch of these dark sayings he found himself in an altered world? Was it that any compact results of philosophy, any science of life, any doctrines alluring to Sense or to Pride, lay within the charmed domain of the 'Ionian Muses'? The stern self-denial of the philosopher's own career, the fragmentary condition of his work, the immaturity of thought and experience in that early day forbid such conclusions; but, explained as he was by a great Thinker, from Heracleitus I gained what to a youthful mind in importance far sur-

passed any results—the first conception of the character and limits of human knowledge, an idea of just method in thinking. Hitherto I had believed that certainty, if not completion, had been reached by human wit in all the larger spheres of science and study ; that the lines were firm, if the details, from the infinity of Nature, might be in various stages of progressive unfolding—that Right and Wrong, further, to take these words in their largest significance as inclusive of every moral and religious problem, were demonstratively ascertained—that the question ‘ What is Truth ’, was one now which, in Bacon’s phrase, could be put only by ‘ jesting Pilate ’. Thus (turning to their personal bearing on self), in matters intellectual and scientific, I supposed due diligence in following accredited paths was the single requisite ; in political, moral, and religious, that the struggle lay simply between the good and the evil, the sceptic and the believer, Ahriman and Ormuzd, wilful blindness and illuminated faith. There could be, as men say, but a right and a wrong ; and my preconceptions were the right alluded to. In reference to the latter fields of thought, this calm acceptance (it is obvious) could not be directly touched by Heracleitus, when the course of an historical examination into Philosophy brought his doctrines before the lecture-room. But he first, as it seems, consciously and clearly asked what was the relation between thought and thing ; how far the world within answered to the world without ; what might be the authority for any human conclusions ; what, in a word, was known in Knowledge, to answer it by Mystery. ‘ Every-  
 ‘ where we stand between contradictions—Part and Whole  
 ‘ —Unity and Divisibility—Soul and Body—Finite and



' Infinite. Existence is change—all things are and are not ;  
 ' we may not say they *are*, but they are *becoming*. The  
 ' world's harmony returns on itself ; opposites pass into  
 ' each other in an eternal reflux. All the settled conclusions  
 ' of man are from one divine source ; all are true, and all  
 ' together. Much information is not science : there is one  
 ' wisdom, to find the law which governs all through all '.

XXI After the lapse of centuries, how strange, simply subtle, unearthly almost, such words sound ! Yet these first (and this by the simple priority which Heracleitus held over Plato in my historical course) aroused me to individual thought ; to ask the ground of my own convictions ; to compare at last the teaching of the schools with the facts of life. Profound then was the shock, I do not know if life can furnish any more impressive, with which I now learned that divergence of judgment—that uncertainty—on the fundamental points of human knowledge, were not necessarily identified with wilful wrong ; that not only was it hopeless to escape Doubt, but that the problems themselves were in their very nature undecipherable. Everything seemed shaken at once : like Orpheus dis severed from Eurydice, I knew not where to turn, or what world it was in which I found myself. The words quoted in my paraphrase contain, some will have recognized, the germs of almost every later philosophy which, entering successively and successively failing in a contest where the strife is the triumph, not the victory—has truly set itself to face the *whole* problem of existence ; which has bravely confessed that Faith and Sight, Fact and Reason, pass into each other, and are the inseparable poles of a larger unity ; that a true science must solve all, or solve nothing. But the

purely ontological bearing of the system I pass over here : it is enough to notice that, translated into their modern equivalents, the dark phrases of Heracleitus will be found the statement of problems not belonging to some ' ideal ' sphere, or remote from our daily thoughts. They are questions put in many nurseries ; they underlie most lines of practical life. The circle widens as we approach it, and by force of the ' one law ', that Unity which at once pervades and is Science, contradictions seemingly ' metaphysical ' reproduce themselves in every province of what Auguste Comte would fondly isolate as ' Positive Philosophy '. The *speciality* at once, the obscurity, and the mysterious eternal influence of Plato lie in this, that beyond any Grecian Thinker, and immeasurably beyond almost any modern Thinker, he grasped the dynamic Unity of the Universe ; that the metaphysical, moral, emotional, and physical aspects of every problem were always together before him ; that all Science, in his treatment, is immanent in every portion of Science. But he felt consciously what most men feel ignorantly. What is the relation of the knowledge which seems only consciousness of our inward thoughts and impressions, towards what seems not less securely and essentially known, an absolutely external world : how Space and Time, *finite* only in our experience, can yet be portions of the Illimitable and the Eternal—conceptions which we can only define by intervention of the idea, *infinite* : what subtle gradations ever unite and ever separate life and matter, soul and body ; and more mysterious yet, yet more closely influential over life, crying aloud to the simplest heart as to the subtlest, questions that agitate thrones and cottages—how Omni-

potence can mentally be reconciled with human Freedom, the perfect Creator with the imperfect work, absolute Goodness with mortal Sin—the Above with the Abyss :—many centuries passed before these mighty problems could be felt in Ephesus, yet in the heart of the sorrowful Heracleitus they were potentially present,

Like hints and echoes of the world  
To spirits folded in the womb.

XXII He who has never thought on these high arguments, has not exercised man's noblest function ; who has never sighed over them, fails in human sympathy. Revelation, without explaining, resolves many such contradictions by referring them to a future and transcendental experience, or by uniting under a higher law of celestial Love—in other words, affirms the mysteries and leaves them ; gives a method of thought, not results ; law, not ' much information '. Many will say here, It is enough ; we ask no more. But believers and disbelievers alike, by many thousand volumes, have attested that man's nature imperiously urges the attempt to find some satisfying answer within the sphere of reason for perplexities so vital ; have borne witness to the necessity, the obligation, the joy of elevated thoughts on these arduous and supersensual inquiries. True, they are unanswerable ; true, that to justify, in the strict sense, God's ways to man in the material or the spiritual world lies beyond even a Milton's impassioned logic ; yet it is a real gain, if first we recognize the all-pervading contradictions of existence, and then are able, in some degree, to bring them beneath the idea of a larger and comprehensive unity. Nor does this philosophy, I would a second time remind the reader, belong to a remote

or an ideal realm. The subtleties of transcendental thought are, by transmutation, the commonplaces of the market—the Gods never far from human struggles. During how many whole centuries, for instance, have ‘Freedom’ and ‘Necessity’ been battle-cries, raised successively in perhaps every European nation! Men felt the opposition involved in these correlative conceptions—imagined such contradictions must each exclude the other—ranged themselves under this banner or that; and, by one-sidedness, fell into excesses of belief and action fatally affecting the course of life, and filling them with mad presumptions on the life to follow. Wearied at last and shame-hearted at the results, men have perhaps let the combat rest; have said with partial truth, These are verbal controversies: Nature is reality—Man, her minister and interpreter. And then the strife has renewed itself—the spiritual perplexity we had thought exiled, like the wraith which, turn what way he would, terrified the Highland chief on the eve of mortal conflict, reappears; again the schools resound, and the subtle intellect exhausts years between the ideal contradictions of Thought and Matter, Reality and Phenomenon, Law and Individual; now drawing one extreme into exaggeration, now partializing the philosopher’s whole science of Nature by setting aside the problem altogether. Treat them as we choose,—I am aware that men of might, radically opposed as Mill and Ruskin, agree in the sentence of proscription (and diffidently and unwillingly do I dissent from them)—these difficulties are no mere freaks of fancy, neither wilful nor unreal. Each fundamental conception, like the bipolar forces of magnetism, has its hostile correlative; seems at once to be and not to be; exists only to

human thought when we recognize the possibility of its antagonist, and yet, by the very recognition of that antagonism, appears to part with existence. As the son of Blyson saw,—turn what way we will, we stand between contradictions.

XXIII Such, or somewhat such, for on matters so exquisitely enigmatical I cannot hope to have spoken with force or clearness, was the predominant sense of Mystery which now fell on me. In truth, perhaps no clearer statement is ever possible : the higher philosophy is an impression, not a formal system—a method (I repeat it often, for he who grasps this, grasps Science), not a result. Yet at the risk of weariness I have ventured on some details, thinking that the difficulties involved are at once common, and dismissed often with vague words, from the superficial fancy that they are opposed to action ; or the fancy, almost equally superficial (though Carlyle's), that action solves them ; from cowardly acquiescence in seeming explanations ; or, finally, from a very weak and worldly contempt for man's high privilege of Imaginative Reason, because, perplexed in the labyrinth of our own existence, our last word in Philosophy can be only the calm confession of wise ignorance, or ignorant wisdom. Yet, to return to self, I could not reach at once that humble and enhumiliating result of inquiry. In Plato, soon studied in chronological order, I found a far wider exposition of doctrines fundamentally akin to the hints of Heracleitus, set forth in language so exquisite in its perfection that in our whole European prose literature I know none that can approach it for a moment's rivalry, and adorned by a more than poet's poetry of imagination. But the trenchant severity

of logic in 'Parmenides', the grace and infinite suggestiveness of 'Phaedrus', although *this* exemplified the method of Theoretic argument (I use the adjective in the noble sense which is one of the many gifts our language has received from Ruskin) which Plato in 'Parmenides' systematized with force and subtlety unequalled by any other among the sons of men, left the riddle of our own experience totally unanswered. The Sphinx transmutes herself into the spirit of every age; no previous answer, if given, solves the enigma succeeding:—Plato's problems, though analogous, are not ours. And, meanwhile, the avenues to speculative thought once opened, as new contrasting difficulties arose within and without, the whole framework of previous supposed sure convictions seemed to break up amidst heart-rending pangs, supplications for light, and pride-humiliating confessions. It is due to Truth, my only aim, to repeat that the mastery of conscience, the sense of right and wrong, and that which handles daily life, were in no degree confused or impaired by that great shock of bewilderment. Yet scarcely less was it hard, under the dictates of this new proclamation of inexplicable mystery to part with so much of childly belief as appeared in the first moments of revolution an inevitable sacrifice, so much endeared at once from present association, and from origin during the days untroubled by Knowledge. I had believed—and books and preachers lent strenuous confirmation to that belief—every absolute difficulty resolved, doubt answered, all things in the moral and intellectual universe secure; and now, as Wordsworth tells of himself, I could have grasped the hedgerow trees when I walked for assurance that, here at least, a something real existed.

XXIV When nations are convulsed by change or menaced war, every star in the sky appears a portent and prophetic of evil. It is the same in the revolutions of the soul. As, in due course of academical studies, I read of the high achievements, the heroic virtues (superficially often by Christian Apologists accounted for as 'exceptional') the pure morality and healthy perfect conceptions of common duty held and practised in Athens or in Rome, and implying, by the clearest rational analogy, the contemporaneous existence of a vast substratum of virtuous household life,—I was perplexed to reconcile with what appeared the requisitions of the faith of the day, with the proclamation of our immeasurable superiority to paganism, the irresistible sense which study gave, of a great compensation running through the ages. How could both be true, and both together? Yet again, if there were *not* this compensation, how should a man with common human feelings bear to think of the millions 'gone over to the majority' *without* the pale of Christendom? If such conclusion be refused, could we look on them (to take a picture from the studies of the moment) without a sadness deeper far than that told in Hellenic story, when Xerxes the king (whose existence was at this time strangely realized to me by the discovery of his own solemn sayings inscribed on the rocks of Irak-Ajemi), from his white throne set beneath Abydos wept for the inevitable death of the many myriads he saw drawn out before him, the ten thousand crowned Persians, Arians, Assyrians, Bactrians, Indians, and others innumerable, crossing Hellespont to Sala and Doriscus?—This problem is one of the many which the Past originates; but the Present reproduced it, when, through Prichard's great

work on Ethnology, a vision of the multitudes of our race and the differences which appear to interalienate the human family by limits original and impassable, was impressed upon my mind with all the force and conviction of Science. What, I asked, was this restless and distracted Christendom, that we should presume—and it is the presumption of every preacher—to foresee the ultimate destiny, to unriddle the fate of life for Berbers, Senegambians, Euskaldunes, Tungusians, the Aino and the mysterious population of Dai Nippon, Vazimbos of central Madagascar, Guarani and Lenguas of the world beyond Atlantic (I give the names, for names realize)—men indeed, but men between whom and our own race, with its specifically peculiar religion, Science could detect no sign of more than generic consanguinity? As the tribes of mankind from this ‘mount of speculation’ passed before me, I felt as the passionate poet when he looked up to ‘the heavenly temples of the great universe and aether studded with white stars’, asking the whence and whither of such august creations: or again as another subtle spirit, who henceforth held me by the spell of heart and intellect, when he too—and yet Pascal, if any, was surely conversant with the raptures of devoted faith—looked up and said ‘*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m’effraie*’. The book whence I quote these words has in truth been beyond most a spiritual influence over men: beyond most Pascal’s ‘Thoughts’ justify Milton’s description ‘the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up to a life beyond life’. Deeply therefore was my awakening conviction of the world’s mystery, nourished even by the general studies just hinted at, strengthened by pages in which the conflict of faith and



of perplexity is clothed in language of immortal eloquence. When I first read the 'Chaque chose est ici vraie en partie, 'fausse en partie . . . Tous leurs principes sont vrais : des 'pyrrhoniens, des stoïques, des athées : Mais leurs conclusions sont fausses, parce que les principes opposés sont 'vrais aussi',—the famous profession of belief in the perpetual flux of human nature;—or that short sentence, simple and deep as childhood, 'Les raisons qui étant vues de loin 'semblent borner notre vue, quand on y est arrivé ne la 'bornent plus : on commence à voir au delà',—I cannot express without words apparently overstrained the sense of moral catastrophe, almost physical in its far-extending intensity, with which such confessions from such a thinker affected me. 'C'est une chose horrible, de sentir écouler 'tout ce qu'on possède'. Pascal appeared to stamp with the irresistible might of genius and proclaim as it were on the housetops, a thousand feelings dormant hitherto and diffident within the heart's secret chambers. A Christian, a mathematician, a man of the world,—if in last result this gifted spirit could say only, he saw 'trop pour nier et 'trop peu pour s'assurer', had I any right to disappointment or to alarm should I rediscover at the goal that ignorance I had once too proudly believed left for ever as I started on the pursuit of knowledge? 'C'est une ignorance 'savante qui se connaît': but was this, indeed, the 'be all 'and end all', the final word of Wisdom?

XXV Two of our own writers, fundamentally contrasted in the results and in the form of their teaching, combined next to confirm these convictions. One, a seer if not a poet, armed like Thor his hero with crushing power rather to destroy the false shows and hypocrisies of daily life, than

to replace them by fresh forms of light and truth : one of the elder Gods with large bold utterance : a Titan dethroned, half blind to the glow and beauty in the eyes of Hyperion, groaning over the lost early world, mistaking often retrospect for prophecy, his own restrictedness in practical action for national impotence, conscious beyond most of the strength and health and nobleness of former ages, yet eager to recognize what is excellent and harmonious in the present, rugged yet tender-hearted, genuine Man : in this age the most lofty-minded and impetuous of Truth's unsuccessful suitors. . . . Who has succeeded ? Not the other, although his also was a truly inspired soul, a spirit so aethereally winged, that one would have thought the loftiest star of heaven within his visitation, yet moved by sympathy more than common for man, frequent in ministrations to the poor and suffering, loving his fellow creatures with womanly tenderness, but, like Dante, uniting that love to scorn of wickedness, hatred of tyranny, and sorrow almost beyond even his command of words over ' the world's ' wrong '—adding ' the tears of the defenceless ' to ' the ' anger of the just '. He, to sum up in a word, (and that his own), if any of the sons of men was himself what he described :

—A Poet hidden

In the light of thought,

• Singing hymns unbidden,

Till the world was brought

To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

Like a high-born maiden

In a palace tower,

Soothing her love-laden

Soul in secret hour

With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower.

Deep indeed is the thankfulness, devout the reverence due from those, and the young especially, whose hearts men like Carlyle and Shelley (to borrow the sublime imagery of the Hebrew prophet) have touched with coals of fire. Yet it is an equal duty to love and to revere with discrimination. I shall not repeat the charge, common and exaggerated, that Shelley's poetry is deficient in human grasp and interest: believing that this criticism arises partly from secret unwillingness to admit the many sad conclusions of his thought, partly from a careless confusion of his youthful imperfect works with the later, in part from the subtleness and intensity of his genius and the fact that (in his own noble phrase), he has not sufficiently 'tempered this 'planetary music for mortal ears'. But it is impossible not to feel with pain the crude violent precipitance, for which the courageous sincerity of his theological convictions can hardly atone, and that over-estimate of his own insight into metaphysical and moral truth which led Shelley to deface so many splendid stanzas by the interfusion of a Platonism falsely so esteemed. At the crisis however in my own life, of which I am speaking with an egotism, inexcusable without the strong sense that what I felt was a most frequent (and hence representative) struggle, common-place to a degree which divests it almost of personality—the poet's fluctuating scepticism hardly touched my own religious convictions. These, considered as *transcendental* faith, appeared to lie within a sphere beyond or beside the perplexities of life and speculation; and years passed before full perception of their interdependence. Nor, on the other hand, however anxious for entire adherence to so powerful a thinker, could I give assent to many, perhaps

to what may be justly reckoned the cardinal points of Carlyle's teaching. Of the secret sophistry in his 'doctrine of sorrow and renunciation',—the simple untruth of his announcement 'that for suffering and enduring there 'is no remedy but striving and doing'; that 'manhood 'begins only when we have reconciled ourselves to necessity, 'and thus in reality triumphed over it'; lastly, of the superficial tirade against happiness, the supposed discovery that, by substitution of the syllables 'blessedness', a glimpse of light, an 'everlasting yea', dawns upon the soul,—I shall in a more appropriate place attempt some criticism. Such thoughts were far then from a reader to whom the lifelong love of Désirée here, and the hope of her love hereafter, composed the better part of all that by human ingenuity, could be conceived as *blessedness*. But even then, Want of Belief, the prophet's reiterated complaint, I could not conscientiously hold the sin of these ages: I wondered at the weight, 'heavy as frost', of men's customary faith; far more at what they believed, than at what they doubted. 'True guidance in return for loving 'obedience, properly, if he knew it, the prime want of man', the eloquent sentence which sums up this chapter of Carlyle's philosophy, when interpreted by his own 'Hero Worship', appears a pitiful and one-sided cry, an idolization of simple success, of that kingdom of force which may in truth be flattered safely, as, in Pascal's phrase, 'it is never 'subverted.' Interpreted indeed by that most forcible of all commentators, the recent course of event and opinion in Europe, I would not hesitate to term these words the voice of a philosophical slave crying for a phantom Utopia, the expression of a Dulolatry which

has done service to Rome, and would almost satisfy Vienna.

XXVI Were this a criticism, I might dwell on other master-works which in several ways, but all tending to one result, left another reader than had opened them. Careless Youth wanders into a magic circle unawares, laughs with friends, takes his pleasure in racing-boats or across country, attends hall and chapel, and meanwhile the sky grows dark at mid-day, and stars come out and dance above him, and spirits gather round, and the Magician is behind as he turns :—and as we read of the Adept who returned with Agrippa from his incantation within the Coliseum, although after awhile the vision closes, he sees spectres in common daylight moving over the housetops in the Corso. Or (as I attempted to describe the first influences of imaginative poetry over youth by a parable borrowed from Simonides), so we might speak of early study under the figure of Eleusinic initiation, perhaps more worthily. We have gone out from Athens in festival dress on a harvest night, the Academy is on the left, the torch-bearers escort us in safety by the rock where Oedipus sat once, and its mysterious inhabitants, Earth and Darkness ; the white cliff of Colonus seems to carry down a glimmer of moonbeams above the Furies' grove and Dionysos, it may be (for the nightingale is silent) shouting to his Nymphs :—' Olive-sandalled ' Aegaleos now glooms larger on the right, and the waves run softly to our feet over the sands of Sciros :—it has been a delightful expedition :—but the guides press onward, the torches sparkle, we are before the shrine of Demeter—Ah ! the world may mock us, and we return their laughter, as we cross the river bridge, and resume common life ; but

the Initiation survives scorn and thoughtlessness and merri-  
ment ; but we have seen the Mysteries. Simonides, Lucretius, Tacitus, Augustine, Shakspeare, Kant, Goethe (the spirits are unaware of the humorous irony suggested perhaps by such juxtaposition), were each in turn Hierophants to me of ' Mother Earth ', Interpreters of Nature. But each, also, implied wonders beyond his explanation ; and when the course of study led me at last to positive science, Physiology and Chemistry, (as already hinted), renewed in another sphere the tangle and the labyrinth of ethical and ontological contradictions.

XXVII Thus, whatever I saw, heard, or read, was the proclamation of a new perplexity. The Sphynx sat by every highway ; in churches and libraries she seemed to put forth her riddle with an ' Answer this, or die ' ; in the world without, with deeper scorn, she mocked the solutions and anodynes supplied by books and teachers, ancient or living, —Augustine and Luther, Butler and ——. Now I began to think the most commonplace matters of experience the most unfamiliar to men ; now no miracle, I felt, could be half so miraculous as the daily ways of human kind, as the bare sight of this loftiest and lowest of visible things, this amalgam of dust and immortality. Why so much ' dead ' eyeless loss ' in God's own world, so much unmerited suffering, so many slight errors, simple thoughtlessness, blind accidents even, converted into shame and ruin ? why legions of souls born, of whom it is affronting mockery to say, they were born free to choose the good which no more fell within their possible reach than rivers to the Arab in the Sahara ? To *explain* these things by ' Mystery ', is to illuminate darkness by darkness. Read the first item in

the list set forth by one of the most competent of observers, 'The largest number of young criminals are orphans or illegitimate ; or, if their parents are living, they are of bad conduct or character',—and search for a solution, truly satisfying to reason and to conscience, through all the volumes of Mazarin and Russell Street, all the treatises in Bodleian or Vatican. Ah, better say at once, 'Behold, we know not any thing'.—When in our frequent College services some familiar voice reached the prayer of the Litany for those in 'danger, necessity, and tribulation',—a phrase drawn out immediately into that pathetic catalogue which in its wide scope embraces so few that hear it, so many thousands to whom it is unknown,—in those days the words fell on me with an intensity of significance which seemed often to transform the moment into hours ;—I asked, the heart within the heart *must* ask at times,—Can we securely say such supplication is answered, the world's evil appreciably less ? . . .

XXVIII Had this ever-increasing sense of wrong, bewilderment, and ignorance, (extended thus from the metaphysical to the moral world), brought with it results which some, I fear, will gladly assume,—proud contempt of those to whom such thoughts were alien, chilled affection towards friends, thanklessness for the thousand blessings of life, indifference to healthy joy, denial of the consolations of Nature, enfeebled energy in practical duties and action,—reason would have been to suspect its origin from some 'baseness in the blood', some lurking infirmity. Who would dare assert himself clear of such elements ? Yet, whatever the cause, I could not truthfully confess to these effects. I do wrong indeed even seemingly to apologize

for convictions, in all ages regarded with justice as one great lesson of Nature and of Revelation, taught alike by Aeschylus and by Gerson, reiterated, I cannot say enforced, by speech and writing in every province of Christendom : the moral of creeds, the mainspring of religious ethics. Yet what beyond all added doubt to perplexity, was the contradiction which I found involved in the attitude which Christian counsellors—not mine specially, but through many ages,—maintained towards difficulties which they have by turns used, denied, or refuted ; which they have explained to convince the sceptic of the superiority of ‘ faith ’, or accepted to silence him by the show of ‘ humility ’. How often, after sad confession of the feelings here recorded, high-souled and subtle-minded friends, hoarse it might be with preaching on the text ‘ Vanity of Vanities ’, on the groans of creation, the misery of man,—with the same force of conviction said (in other words) ‘ Eat, drink, and be merry : all this is the care of the higher Powers ’ ; laughing down as an idle theorem the existence of that sorrowful mystery they had just set forth, and perhaps with even an over-estimate of its darkness ! In truth, as already noticed, I daily marvelled more not at men’s scepticism, but at their faith : that those who had proclaimed the Fall of man their fundamental doctrine, should deny sadness and perplexity as its natural consequence, life-abiding recognition of the more than relics of chaos as a morbid folly :—as if the sphere of religion were in truth alien from real life, ‘ a tale of little meaning tho’ the words are strong ’ :—as if they too had sworn with the poet’s Epicurean voyagers

In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.



I do not hold such separation possible, or I would have omitted from these pages all simply theological considerations. But it is enough : without entering here on further details, I am content to sum up and to justify by a confession wrung from the deepest of human thinkers, convictions which conscience can neither disown or boast of. For it was none less than Shakspeare who painted the world thus :—

Tired with all these, for restful Death I cry,  
 —As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
 And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,  
 And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
 And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,  
 And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
 And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
 And strength by limping sway disabled,  
 And art made tongue-tied by authority,  
 And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,  
 And simple truth miscalled simplicity,  
 And captive good attending captain ill :

—Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,  
 Save that to die, I leave my Love alone.

XXIX If however at times oppressed with such feelings, Life and Nature, Thought and Books—messengers often of sadness—brought me also their contrasting consolations. I shall not speak here of Homer with his great healthy spirit, yet pathetic beyond Dante's pathos, fresh to-day as when sung at the courts of Sardis and Sikyon, of Sappho, Catullus, Milton, and Shakspeare, ' joys for ever '. But at this time I owed special thanks to one worthy to be named with these, a poet who seemed sent expressly in the latter days to make the sun more bright, and the winds more musical ; to lighten the ' weary weight of this unintelligible world ', the ' burthen of the mystery ', with ' happiness beyond all

‘hope’; to lead us gently on to some foretaste of ‘the central calm at the heart of all agitation’; to spread ‘the light that never was on sea or land’ over the whole domain of Nature. Long, as remarked before, at strife with my own blessedness, I had rejected his teaching : now

The passion of a moment came  
As on the wings of years :

—Wordsworth became at once an early friend : I thought I had always known him. True, that to claim for this great singer priority either in time or in degree as the interpreter of Nature, was to praise him at the sacrifice of truth, and of the noble names (and not those alone) above quoted,—true, that even the peculiar revolution of which he was the leader had been anticipated by other Englishmen ; that Gray’s ‘Elegy’ for example in thought and style, was almost more Wordsworthine than Wordsworth ; that the fiery genius of Byron had carried the same method into regions beyond ken from Helvellyn, and scaled skies unreflected in Grasmere ;—true, that by no poet of Wordsworth’s eminence were his favourite Horace’s counsels of moderation and finish ever more neglected,—yet also true that none in our days have awakened so many of the truths that never perish, have traced so penetratingly the soul of common things—have afforded the weary and thought-perplexed such deep deep consolation. In hope to render eulogy of such a man not dispraise, I have spoken of Wordsworth mainly in his own language, felicitous (where it is felicitous) beyond expectation or rivalry. To the pleasant temptation of fuller criticism I shall not here give way ; adding only as a personal experience (a matter where it would not be without

value if lovers of poetry could make comparison of impressions),—that of all English poets, Shakspeare, always exceptional, excepted—Wordsworth most unalterably maintains the interest, affection, and delight with which he first affected me. The pages containing the lines named from Tintern recall to-day, as I open them, the flood and fulness of joy, the pleasure almost sensuous in its completeness, for which, nine years since, the reader mentally blessed this great Benefactor. And it was then a further pleasure, now lost, to feel such gratitude towards a living man,—to know that Wordsworth had received already from thousands the firstfruits of unending gratitude, the one truly precious result and real essence of that Fame, which, in ignorance of the world's future, men have agreed to call Immortality.

XXX If the writer has appeared to wander wide from the purpose of his story and *Désirée*, he desires, without the egotism of further justification, to refer to the reason stated at the outset of these digressional pages. That surely would be a poor love, an unenduring, one 'sown only for 'some summer crop' (Plato's graceful words) 'in the 'gardens of Adonis', not incorporate in the whole frame of existence, by which the main intellectual crises of life were not modified, whence affection was itself uninfluenced. The poet may with right question the birth and nursing-place of fancy, and head or heart assert equal claims in his madrigal; but in impulses or powers more deeply rooted, we know that such severance is arbitrary; that thought and feeling are identified in life,—permanently coexistent through its changes. Thus passion also has its phases; and she whom I had loved with unthoughtful rapture of delight in boyhood, reverence and holier adoration in earlier youth,

daily now became more and more the central hope of calm, the soul's anchor, the shrine of that only blessedness where self-disturbance could have no portion. Nor was this contrast alone aroused by indulgence in thoughts of Désirée. O ! it seemed then no vain conceit that I might walk this world to some at least high-aiming end, when led by this fair soul from boyhood to age, sustained in doubt and battle by the love of one whose presence was Courage, and remembrance Peace. The conclusions of ignorance, the overruling sense of mystery just described, I cannot say were by any traceable derivation effects of passion. But, Désirée by my side, I felt always these difficulties would receive pure practical solution. Give me but this one, and I thought I should have all things. When with her now—and she too, as I have feebly indicated, advanced to a most rare womanly perfection—stray words, clear wise questions, hints of cheerful serious experience, revealed constantly her labours for the sick and suffering and sinful : when not seeing her, I often tracked her ' holy footsteps ' turned from the paths of innocent pleasure to the dwellings and amongst the children of the poor ; and thus, even more surely than Laura's, ' turned heavenward '. For, my University course ended with fair success, I had now returned to London and a welcome frank and affectionate as ever from the golden-haired maiden, who, with all that ' the Hours rich in blossoms ' had brought her, maintained the young child's heart unimpaired in freshness,—secure in the confidence that feared no misconstruction, and the happiness which did not need to look beyond the day. And if at times I wished that Désirée did *not* find the present so all-sufficing ; if I thought I must now speak—*this* was put to flight by her own perfect

unreserve and noble heartiness, *that* by the good sense and healthy courage on which her blithesome spirits rested. If entering the house perplexed, determined, or serious, such feelings faded before the smiles and freedom of an intimacy, too precious to be lightly perilled, too delighting to admit alien thoughts : by her dear side within that home of childhood I regained always the childhood of home.

XXXI Come what may indeed, I too have been blessed ; for this intimacy was a prerogative precious beyond royal privileges. Time and circumstance combine to render it so rare that few men, I have often thought, prize at its true value the friendship which has arisen in the ' days disowned ' by memory '. Not grace and beauty in their triumph, not wedded confidence, not even the mutual endearment of children are sureties of fondness that quite equal the many years, the little things of Long-ago, the thoughts shared together from the nursery, the remembered feelings which date almost before we could speak them. All this in truth (and all this was mine), for full completion wanted the seal of the days to come ; yet meanwhile each step onwards in the world without, made me cling closer to that blessing which Time himself who had given, could not replace ; the long familiarity which, I thought with pride, was my own individual privilege. I could please myself by making Désirée what gifts I chose ; for this familiarity permitted it, and she was one of the great race, to whom it is possible to give with no apprehension that the balance of friendship will be thus disturbed ;—to whom giving and receiving are equal, and blessed equally. I could blame her without fear, for to her pure simplicity the sensitiveness of pride or petty personality had no existence : I could praise her

without reserve, for to that honest nature it seemed nothing strange that the friends of her youth should regard her with affectionate partiality. Silence or speech, trifles or serious thought, each might be ventured in turn with this loyal and unselfanalyzing confidingness: we could part without farewell, and meet without special welcome. And then—All know that accursed phrase, ‘Speech was given ‘us to conceal thought’. False though it be, I cannot bear to think how near it is to truth, by operation of conventionality, and littleness, and cowardice. Hence when *any* human creature, breaking through the veils thus interposed, speaks heart to heart, this is almost irresistibly attractive;—when the speaker unites ‘the intuitive decision of a bright ‘and thorough-edged intellect’ to the sweet fancies and pathetic ingenuousness of girlhood, free freshness to staid good sense, blithe hearted from royal innocence and health of nature, yet revealing at every breath a soul conversant with high thoughts and constant in holy actions, pleasure passes into thanksgiving;—when she, by whose side I was, added to all was also the hope of life, the heart’s central darling from her childhood—I do not dare put into language the blessedness of hours which, in the magnificent phrase of Goethe, ‘might have been envied of all the stars in Heaven’.

XXXII Knowing the end, I would linger willingly over these bright days, had they supplied words or deeds for recollection to chronicle. But the few adventures real life, a thing I might almost call diametrically opposed to life in romance, affords, except in most rare instances (the groundwork of the ‘Bride of Lammermoor’ for example), are short, separate moments of suffering or of action, connected not by poetic unity, but by their simple succession in individual

experience, and rarely,—how rarely ! involving as *principal* elements in their course the larger modes of passion. Such, therefore, must not be sought here. Nor again, with similar scant exceptions, is the fugitive drama of conversations, so vivid perhaps and delightful, that they seemed almost to eternalize the passing hour, even during the next—far less when years have gone by—recoverable. Like the fair vision in the heavens Wordsworth has somewhere recorded, these moments were rapture as they went : but ‘ we felt the while We should forget them : they were of the ‘ sky, And from our earthly memory fade away ’. If we tell them, we recreate what we seem to remember. And yet, ‘ the place, the day, the sunshine ’, all things pertaining to those meetings come back at times : I think if I describe one such occasion more, some part, however small, of the favours of the hour may revive in that revocation ; some echo from the far off : some fragrancy from the lost Eden, like that which breathed once from Paradise

—able to drive

All sadness but despair.

XXXIII ‘ Plus on aime, moins on se fie au sentiment ‘ que l’on inspire : Peut-être est il dans la nature d’un amour ‘ profond et vrai de redouter un moment solennel, quelque ‘ désiré qu’il soit, et de ne changer qu’en tremblant l’espérance contre le bonheur même ’. These words of a highly gifted woman may serve as an introduction, only too charming, to the narrative of an autumn day, spent at the close of the six-years period before alluded to with Désirée once more, as at the beginning of my college life, in a foreign land. This was to be but a brief uninvited visit, and then return : it was delightful to think I should give twenty

days to travelling, that I might gain two with her. Inwardly secure of welcome, through a blinding rainstorm I had crossed the sea : had ascended the great romantic river of the North, passed between the Dragon's Rock and the castle arch of the too faithful Toggenburg, dark against the pale azure of a sky that seemed to have wept out its tears, while an orange sunset burned above the violet hills, and the long water-swathes of our course followed the keel like intertwisting serpents of gold and malachite. Thence by cliffs and vines, cities and towers, another broad stream and banks heavy with forests, to a capital lying far within a quiet valley, where the red rock withdrew its ramparts four miles asunder, and between them lay a plain which seemed snatched from Lombardy, squared with vine-ranks and poplar, and fretted now into furrowed network by battalions of yoked and patient oxen. Without the walls I traversed a long walnut avenue ; to the left, the towers and vast roofs of the Cathedral rose above mediaeval battlements ; a lofty bank on the right, thick with trees, and vines, and villas, and intersected midway by a line like the Offa Dyke of Wales,—the wide limit of the Roman city. Vineyard and garden ran far within this line ; and as in Rome itself, the crumbling arches and vaults of the Baths marked the extreme verge of modern inhabitation. Vestiges such as these, in which we trace an ebb of human life, suggest always thoughts of transitoriness and deathlike repose : but my road was alive with counter-signs—the walnut harvest in full activity. From ladders set halfway in the golden green branches children with long poles were beating the leaves, which filled the air with a myrtle fragrance as they fell, preceded by the drop of heavy fruits, dancing and bursting the green



cover as they touched the roadway, or bedded themselves in silence within a litter of strewn leaves and broken bough-fragments. Boys and women in blue skirts, jackets, and pale braided hair, caught and harvested the crop with blackened fingers into rough baskets. Thus about each trunk a picturesque group was formed : they reminded me of the Fairies who in Germany or Ireland danced of old round the mythic almond-tree beneath which the Sungod, slain in his childhood, lay buried, and legend added, to rise again. These peasants were neither gay nor sullen : just employed. As I looked and walked on, I did not feel as generally when one enters a distant city and sees the crowd at work, these are utter strangers. There was a bond of human sympathy they little thought of : the heart-reviving knowledge, *Désirée* was there within, established already a silent friendship between us.

XXXIV Yet this was an error ; all but a younger sister had left the house for a long day's excursion ; they would return from Igel fatigued, she said ; I had best visit them next morning—the one day left before my fixed and expected return to England. The sky lost its blue, the trees their greenness ; there was no longer glory in the grass, or beauty in the vineyards. But I must waste the hours, a few moments before so precious, somewhere. It would be like defeat, I felt, to retrace the road just passed in expectation of immediate triumph ; I crossed the river by a ferry, and on the opposite bank examined the town from a natural belvedere, a ledge of the shaly rock. Then the spirit of Antiquity, the great voices of the Past, rebuking my petty discouragement, carried me out of self by the human interest of that landscape. Though hidden, as I

have said, and seemingly world-sequestered far within the heart of a pastoral valley, yet lofty fragments, 'ruins full of Fate' in darkened stone and grey brickwork, scattered here and there over an area of which not one-fourth part was now occupied, showed that in Roman times this city had been the capital of some powerful province; metropolis, in fact, of Gaul in the Napoleonic sense, of Spain, and of Britain—Augusta Trevirorum. Here Germanicus during an hour of trial had sheltered his noble wife; this was the centre of the so-long successful revolt maintained by the barbarian Civilis against Vespasian. Here Ambrose was born, he who shut the church-gates against an Emperor in his pride: and here, too, Constantine, Julian, and Theodosius held the orientalized court of the gorgeous Second Empire. There is an emanation of majesty and of glory inseparable from relics of Roman workmanship, or from places associated even by name with the strange fascination of that history. Trèves unites both conditions. The vast arches of the Black Gate seemed built for eternity; they had sustained and survived a hermitage, a sanctuary, and a church, constructed and ruined within them. Like the Alban Mount, like the rock platform of Jerusalem, I thought they appeared almost contemptuously impassive to the cyclical growth, splendour, and decay of human religions. But elsewhere farther on, in the grey cathedral, I could see a living relic of the first temporal triumph of Christianity; the walls of a Caesar's palace, the columns raised by imperial Helena, enshrining the seamless coat which but yesterday rent asunder German Catholicism—that spurious but priceless banner (so myriads thought it) of a Faith—and the later history of this fair region, more

than most, has testified to the fact—which may reckon her martyrs by thousands, and her victims by tens of thousands. Looking northward, past the Church of the Virgin, ‘ Go-  
 ‘ thic lighter than a fire ’, I saw the vast ruin, half Roman, half romantic, where the rude orgies of a Prussian soldiery have supplanted the splendid harem of the Prince Bishops and Electors of the ill-named Holy Empire ; farther yet, but beyond the contracted circuit of the present city, that amphitheatre where Constantine the new convert twice gratified his faith or his paganism, letting loose lion, bear, and wolf to the carnage of many thousand heathen and barbarian captives. . . . Enough : I pass over the majority ; but how rich the web of remembrances spread, to an imaginative spectator, over any one of the greater of our European cities ! Not the legend-inwoven robe worn on high festivals by the Patriarch of Rome, not that earlier work of a poet’s loom, variegated with all the histories of the heroic age for the marriage of Thetis and Peleus,—Ariadna desolate by the seaside, and Prometheus chained to the Scythian precipice, images typical of man’s and of woman’s destiny—rival the soul-enthraling splendour, the majestic significance of that spectacle ; it is, at least in my judgment, the one absolutely unalloyed compensation for existence in the fret and frequent littleness of these later centuries.

XXXV In some noble verses Lord Byron, looking on the ancient mistress of Trèves, expressed the conviction that before such sights the voice of personal sorrow should be silenced. From a man so sincere and so great a sufferer, the judgment is remarkable ; it is however but half a truth ; there are sorrows beyond the control of the re-

flective imagination, and that can permanently cloud the spectator's eye, eclipse glasses of the mind. Far, indeed, in fancy was I from the burden of such feelings; yet perhaps the disfavour of the moment, Désirée's unexpected absence, led me to look thus musingly on Trèves; to say, 'such is the race of man'. But one hour that evening (I wisely neglected the child's suggestion) passed in the portion of England or of Heaven which accompanied Désirée and her family to the Moselle, restored the lighter, perhaps healthier heart; and plans were soon settled for what was quickly a bright to-day. The plain of Trèves, I have said, seems like a fragment translated from Lombardy; and a summer, an exotic, an Italian sky vaulted furrowed tilth and green vineyard and reflective stream with crystalline blue into that late autumn. We, a numerous party, for two or three dear English friends had joined us for this little expedition (a walk to the Kreuz Kapelle), threading some narrow streets near the Heiden Thurm presently reached the riverside, where the town, retreating from the choicest site for pleasure or for commerce, had left a wide space between garden-wall and ruinous cottage, and the broad tranquillity of the Moselle below. So equable was the river's lapse that the smallest speck of pearly morning cloud was repeated there in unbroken outline, whilst the deeper waters on the farther side were pierced by the downward lines projected from the lofty cliff—a red rock rising high against the blue, fringed with innumerable poplars, or embattled with close-set vines. White houses dotted this cliff, here singly, there ranged in the transverse series which marked some road into unseen regions beyond the barrier. If alone, so alluring

was the scene, I should have thought it needed only to follow that guidance, and find on the farther side some home in the very heart of peace ; one of those nests we see at times half hidden in high trees, and the fancy rises, the soul might there hap on happiness. But I turned now from the delusion of the ' hidden land ' to present joy, the dear companion beside me. From my recollections of former study, Désirée was delighted to learn that the bridge we soon were crossing, so lofty that it surpassed the highest winter risings of the stream, so solid that it could have had none but Roman origin, was in truth one of the few constructions remaining which acquire a strange, a vast, an almost holy interest from incidental commemoration by the more than Imperial-souled Historian of the Caesars. Tacitus has spoken of it in his narrative of Vespasian's government. Employed on such service, man's classical studies gain a peculiar charm, a sweet womanly consecration. A friend, far deeper-informed than I, joined us while we spoke ; and all the remembrances already noticed as connected with this city, and many more, were talked over with Désirée's bright intelligence, as between vines and cottages, over steps of shaly rock and little promontories of turf bedded in sinuous recesses, we rose slowly high above the Byzantine Cathedral domes towards the ruined chapel ; over which a tall crucifix—a relic, we might call it, of the relic which had once made the ' Kreuz Kapelle ' a centre of pilgrimage—predominated in silent symbolism.

XXXVI At the last angle before reaching the summit, and laughing gaily, we passed a wayside Madonna, a figure painted in white and azure and standing on a snake-

encircled globe. On her head, beneath a star garland, hung a second wreath of withered beech-leaves, placed no doubt for mediation's sake or thankfulness by some poor votary. To the left was a low lantern of dim-coloured glass, the door open and the light extinguished ; on the right, a herse for candles ; in front, two rude white-painted praying benches. Our English jests and laughter fell ; we were in presence of a strange foreign sphere of feeling. Even fanatics for their own faith are conscious often at such a conjuncture, that there may be compensations far off for the belief, sincere but baseless, of which this little rural shrine was the type and witness. Our friend, a large-hearted clergyman, and I, made some remark to this effect. One girl of the party expressed her delight in the simple devotion of the peasantry ; another commented, not unkindly, on the signs of neglect and unfrequency. But Désirée silenced us all by saying, while her violet eyes deepened into purple with earnestness, ' That the sight of ' the symbols or the practice of this foreign faith always ' silenced her ' :—In such scenes she felt equally unable to justify or to condemn : it was a mystery she could only look at, and pass onward. Something in her words or her expression brought suddenly before my remembrance that device of the painted window in the little seaside English church, *Pacem oro* : and then, how or why I knew not, but in a moment the *Fedele Leale*, engraven where above the Tesoretto we two had once together stood overlooking Valdarno : and the thought came like heaven into my heart how many years she had been my one desire—how many—and how desired. . . .

There are seasons, when even the hope which seems

highest in its reach, securest in its foundation, is shadowed by unseen figures of fear and of foreboding. And in these latter more reflective years I had experienced such ; although, when past, they appeared arbitrary insertions into my consciousness, moments of thought alien from my own identity. During those visitations, amongst other modes of disheartenment, it had been almost terrible to remember how many years of life, nay, rather *all* my life, I had cast upon that hope,—that I had staked everything as it were on one dear head, even though it might truly be in Sappho's phrase, *χρύσω χρυσοτέρα*:—but *now*—Let me look at Thee, I cried inwardly, and find all in Thee : all my blessedness here, and all my hope hereafter. . . . Lost in such thoughts I looked up, and Désirée smiled at the sudden silence and seriousness : she ran gaily over the remaining steps of ascent, thick with thyme and moss and blue scabious and golden wort, and beckoning us to her side on a low fragment of the chapel wall, called at once, from historians so learned, for the legend of the ruin.

XXXVII A great Philosopher said long ago, Knowledge is only Remembrance. Whether this be true, or how far by inverse rule we create what we think we are recollecting, I shall not attempt to decide :—here I wish only to preserve an outline, or what appears so, of our friendly companion's story ; a nursery tale indeed, yet well suited to the time and the place of narration. For, rather too wearied perhaps with the ascent to enjoy at the moment that glorious prospect,—twenty miles of the Moselle valley and the city at our feet,—every one was delighted with this unexpected discovery, the treasure-trove we might call it, of a Legend revealed on a scene so romantic : They

gathered round, and the little group in which I was sitting by my own dear Désirée, (close, so close), included presently the whole of our party, ten or twelve, ranged on turf and stones, amongst tall foxglove and wild autumnal lilies, with smiles and delighted silence. For he told us how, in the ancient time, when wishing was having, the King and Queen of Igel not far distant, walking on the narrow terrace of their garden beneath apple and walnut-trees which we saw by the Roman Monument yesterday, prayed for a child, and how the Queen's prayer was heard, for hers was the tenderest, and presently a new star appeared in the midday blue, and a bright golden-haired little creature with eyes bluer than the sky came softly down, smiling amongst the fallen apple-blossoms of April,—and because they had so long desired a child, they named her Desiderata. Then she grew up fair and good, but not like other kings' daughters : for she would wander into the cottages, and give her toys to the other children there, and tell them stories of the Angels. And when she walked in the garden, the linnets and throstles came and sang upon her shoulders, and she talked to the wild things and the trees, and she knew the secrets of every young rose : but no one could read her own secret fancies. Her mother said, ' Desiderata ' is too good for earth ' : but her old nurse always answered, ' Dear Lady, by no means ; the Princess is not ready for ' heaven '. ' Flowers must be fruits ', she would say at other times. ' The Princess is wild and wayward often, ' and loves her own will, as children will do ', (here the youngest child smiled and looked entirely satisfied), ' and ' when I scold her, she looks deep at me, and never puts ' her finger in her mouth '. (There the same little one



took hers out.) So Desiderata grew up, and many suitors came to wed her, but none sped in their wooing :—and at last came Prince Adalbert her cousin, and pleased her most, for he was gay, and brave, and wise also : and Desiderata loved him. Yet the nurse said always to the Queen, ‘ He wants only one thing, and that is love ’ :—but the maiden would not see this. And so Adalbert and Desiderata were married—(at which the smallest listener started and cried ‘ No,’ resolutely)—yes, they were married, and the nurse’s husband, who was a great magician, came and built them a splendid palace, with hall, and tower, and bower, on this green hill-top where we are now sitting : and they lived a long while together in health and happiness.

XXXVIII Even the youngest among us knew the tale was not ended here. She put her little hands over her ears, stamped impatiently, and cried ‘ The story ! the story ’ ! in her highest tones ; on which the narrator, to provoke her, interposed some wise remark on the peculiarities of the German fairy mythology. Yielding however to that appeal, he told her how, before long, Adalbert began to grow colder in his affection to Desiderata, thinking her either too poor-spirited and humble, because, though a princess, she would go still among the poor ; or too much a child, because she loved the birds, the gay insects, and the flowers so ; or because he found too much happiness in his own studies and thoughts ; or because he did not pray God to keep the loving heart alive in him. Then how the nurse saw her dear child, as she called Desiderata still, growing paler day by day, until her husband, who had built the palace by his magic, warned the prince that, without alteration for the better, some great and strange evil would

befall him. But Adalbert answered in pride and anger ; and when presently he saw Desiderata, who had borne him no children, come up the path where the image of the Virgin stands, with one poor ragged neighbour's child on her shoulder, and one in her left hand, and one clinging to her bright dress behind, his wrath flamed out and he cried to the nurse, ' Take your child again ' ; and putting on his travelling robe and sword, he strode fiercely down the path, and would not look his dear wife in the face as she smiled and spoke to him, but went his way to seek adventures in the wide world. Then directly a wonder was seen, the palace faded away, and nothing but a few grey stones were left on the place ; and the magician who built it said, ' Whenever Adalbert repents and thinks again, " I love her " , ' it will be seen again, but not before ' , and so always and always. . . . But Desiderata directly put off her royal robes, and dressed herself like a poor maiden, and went out alone, thinking she would follow Adalbert as far as earth was green and sky blue. Many days she wandered on and on, and could not find him ; and at last, when she was faint and foot-sore, and her eyes failed, and her limbs trembled, the angels led her back to this place, and changed her into a wild white lily. So she grew among the stones where her bower had been, and the rain fell and the dew rose and the sun smiled upon her ; but her soul was asleep, and Desiderata dreamed only of Adalbert.

But, after awhile, as Adalbert at Charlemagne's court grew weary of battles and feasts and adventures, his heart turned again to Desiderata, and he went and stood by the sea-side near Fontarabia. And because the stars by night tell the sea all the secrets of heaven, and the rivers running

into it all the secrets of earth, he asked the Sea where he should find his Love again. But the waves laughed together, and whispered words he could not understand, and would not tell him anything of Desiderata. Then a little child came singing at sunrise along the golden sands, in poor ragged clothes, and with no shoes on its little feet ; and presently it stumbled over the sharp stones, and fell into a thornbush that grew there, and the thorns pierced its forehead and hands till they bled ; but the child sang still. And Adalbert took it to his bosom. Then the child's face glowed from within, and wings grew from his shoulders, and he lifted the prince into the air like a mighty angel ; and lo ! Adalbert was in the garden before his palace door. The palace was tall and bright as of old, and he went in ; but the doors all stood open, and he went from one chamber to another, and he could not find Desiderata. But in her own bower a fair white lily was growing ; so Adalbert sat down there. And because she had loved the flowers, he took the stem in his hands, and as he wept and said ' I love ' her ', he broke the stem :—and in a moment Desiderata was at his side, and smiled and kissed his forehead and said, ' Now and for ever '.

XXXIX ' But where was the palace now, and were these ' the lilies ? ' asked Désirée's little sister. ' It is seen sometimes still, I am told ', our legendary friend answered : ' but what the word is which brings it back—that I shall ' not tell you '. Then arose a blithe discussion, a ' spray of ' English is tossed about ' from corner to corner of the grey ruin, and the great cross stood above, and silent thorn-crowned Image, turning aside, it might have seemed, in pity of circumstances alien so far from human destiny as an

hour of unalloyed happiness. 'Look on me', had my ears been open to such warning, I knew afterwards He might have said : 'Yet a few years, and calamities, not mysterious 'or avenging, but in the common course of things, will 'have darkened many hearts beneath me : and one it may 'be, will climb the hill, returning hither alone, and will 'look on me, and cry for a little help, one moment of these 'moments again, and that my countenance should turn 'towards him in sign of mercy' . . . . Science tells us how throughout spaces so vast that millions of years, not terms of linear distance, is the only expression available to convey any conception of their vastness, a subtle fluid demonstrably exists, by aid of which the light of the remotest star-cloud at last reaches the astronomer : but is there some limit to the votiferous aether of heaven ? Strong in the confidence, in the humility of love, I could not raise this question *then* ; nor, close to Désirée, had I indeed to search the skies for over-earthly happiness. Gathering one of the lilies of the legend, a scentless silver cup, fringed and filmy with rose, that grew at her feet, she gave it me with a frank smile ; but I could not return it. I sat silent by Désirée with a thousand thoughts which were one thought, —all converging on the determination I would delay no longer, prophetic of victory at last, the crown of love returned, the desire accomplished. She was speaking, I believe, but I heard only, not articulate words, but an inner remembrance of that strain of Beethoven, in which, re-appearing after a hundred variations, the trembling air runs through ripples of melodious ascent, till on the highest octave it seems to triumph in the consummation of some ineffable longing, and passes beyond cognizance in the

ecstasy of its own music. It was one of those moments, tranquil from the very depth and transcending tenderness of joy, when desire almost passes into possession : when the so far distant star appears graspable by the intensity of our gaze upon it : when by an identification how inexpressibly delightful, Faith has become the substance of what it hopes for.

XL Was it so indeed ? ‘ You seem to see the palace ‘ of Desiderata ’, the words with which Désirée broke this reverie, left me uncertain : I was startled, not as often, when another speaks our own thoughts, but that she did *not* speak them. The time had come ; yet I must, I knew, hasten thence first for decision of certain material circumstances (not requiring record here,) in England. I too would part on this holy hill from my Desiderata, to return and make her mine more truly. Taking leave at once where we stood, the blue riddle of Désirée’s eyes on mine, and her blithe farewell the last sound I heard, I retraversed the well-known way. Sharing in the decisiveness of my determination, this seemed but a moment’s journey to England : I need not give it more detail. Then, writing a few words—and *how* few contained all, I wondered—as if through some strange spell, chased by self from self, I hastened across the farther sea on a mission which could not be declined to Ireland. For there, after various revolutions of fortune, our old family nurse had made a final settlement in the city of Cashel ; she was ill, begged a visit from one of ‘ her children,’ and several reasons concurrently determined me to obey the summons. Some days must pass before Désirée’s reply, and it would be a comfort to speak at last and share hopes with a friend so faithful.

For deeply convinced that to take counsel, in such matters at least, is cowardice, I had hitherto been silent to all :— but I had dared the conclusive deed now ; I might justly seek the reward of sympathy.

There is no necessity however to record the words and experiences of a visit, only memorable to me because it fell at a season so critical. With many wise sayings, many homely phrases, texts, and childly endearments, and womanly tears, this aged early friend listened to my story delighted. Need I say she approved all her nurseling had done ; thought me right in delay, and right in action ; gently clapped her hands at learning the letter was despatched ; that she held my triumph secure ; that in her judgment it was Désirée's happy fortune deserved envy ? Thus my last images of light and hope are strangely blended with recollections of that ancient capital ; with the furrowed features, and worn hands, and low voice of one who now knows how far the humble confidence of her own faith was surely founded. I may perhaps never visit Cashel again ; but never, I suppose, shall forget the last evening there, as the sun melted down into ruby haze behind the purple rock, and great cathedral, the square castle-tower of old troublous times, the battlemented chancel ; nor, with these remembrances, the last consolations of this aged saint. Ready, now to start for England, and find there the words of final solution, I expressed some natural, I hoped not foolish, fears. She looked up, laying her hands on mine, and laughing blithely as she pointed out the road homewards, ' Go, go ', she said, like the saint who consoled the mother of Augustine, ' trust in God ; it cannot be that He ' will bring the cry of so many years to nothing '.

## THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

### BOOK III.

I Meanwhile, round which of the many noble buildings of London, ignorantly underrated from familiarity and from the vastness of our metropolital area, is human interest gathered in largest amount, and with most vital sympathy? Which, to the angels in guard over the world's capital, bears the most grandly pathetic significance? Not the stronghold of Caesar and of Conqueror, although within that spectral whiteness of turreted wall sovereigns have inaugurated their reign with exultation, and closed it in the agonies of discrowned dishonour; though girls and children, statesmen and prelates, have consecrated the spot with innocent blood, or ennobled it by final fortitude;—not the more than Cathedral Abbey, although within this alone amongst the sanctuaries of Europe, the kings of twenty generations sleep a sleep unbroken by the clarion of foreign foes, or the wild footsteps of intoxicated anarchy;—not the halls where, as in a colossal and labyrinthine reliquary of human kind, the vestiges of man's creation darken the air with phantasmal forms, and load it with the mysterious voices of annihilated centuries. . . . All these, indeed, in solemnity of interest far transcend any pomp or prodigality of words in which I might endeavour to give their signi-

ficance expression. But there is one great building which, defying the employment of any poetical art in its notice, yet by that plain homeliness of name appeals to a deeper mode of poetry : for the General Post Office, to me at least (but I think with justice), has long appeared the most pathetic and representative of our civic monuments, the central heart of that human interest which, spread through a circuit almost illimitable, radiates round London. It is not that the granite flags, moss-stained here and there, or saddened with the yellow withering of interstitial grass, are conscious of the hurrying tread of the vast multitude, a nation indeed dispersed over the whole world, for whom, within the noble atrium, messages of love and desertion, wealth and ruin, death and life, are waiting their season ; for during much of the day the great city contains few spots of profounder solitude. But this solitude itself, lying within the shadow of the vast Cathedral, and like the islands of the Nile or Niagara, almost impassive amidst a roar which has hardly paused for centuries, touched me—when, returning to England after the visit described, a ‘ spirit in my feet ’ led me there first from the clamorous railway—more deeply through the double contrast thus presented ; the tumult and trepidation of life without, and the heart-audible voices within, oracular of ten thousand destinies. Mine, too, I thought, did that lie here ? Like a pilgrim at Delphi or Jerusalem, I could have bowed before the shrine with awe ; and as I thought, I looked upwards with the look which is prayer to the

Cross of gold

That shines over city and river,

—and O ! thence onwards in fancy to the high crucifix



above the Moselle valley, and Désirée standing beneath, and that last glance of confiding earnest eyes, whose message had seemed more than farewell. Now first I felt what it is to have cast oneself, like a child cradled in the arms of Fate, on the Unchangeable and the Irresistible. My destiny might be lying here, but less than royal prerogative would not unfold it to me before the morning : it might be lying here, and if so, Omnipotence itself, without miracle, could not now reverse it.

II Othello was played that evening at a half-crowded and noisy theatre : in the autumnal absence of all friends with whom I might deceive the hours, I went eagerly. This was a foolish resource. ' Faith, half asleep ' like Desdemona, to the tawdry Venice of the stage, and the declamation of so many passionate words fit only for whispering, alone in the crowd with thoughts of Désirée, when I heard

If Heaven would make me such another world  
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite  
I'd not have sold her for it :

—I laughed almost in irony. He, who against his ' soul's ' joy ' endured, even for a moment or a metaphor, to set any earthly treasure in the balance, could have loved, I thought, but little. To gain the whole world, and lose one's own soul's Darling, what would it profit ? I went in imagination from Cyprus and Venice to Verona, and, in Romeo's answer to Laurence, found a far homelier and higher passion, a something which seemed to speak all the immense yearning, the eager tenderness of such a crisis as mine, in language itself ' deep as love ' :

Come what sorrow can  
 It cannot countervail the exchange of joy  
 That one short minute gives me in her sight.  
 Do thou but close our hands with holy words,  
 Then love-devouring Death do what he dare,  
 It is enough I may but call her mine.

If these words seemed a bright omen for that evening, if I accepted them as my last thought and augury before sleep, this was not an individual weakness. I am not alone in the folly, if folly it is, which finds that 'my Shakspeare,' as with one who came nearest in glory, every Englishman is privileged to call him,—in many inspired lines has furnished eternal oracles for his countrymen.

III These words ringing through my memory, and hardly daring to wish it day, I slept : and when day came, inwardly certain that I distinguished already the steps of the messenger, bearing from that central station the lines of fate along the most crowded streets of London,—going out into a certain place shadowed with trees and gay with the last autumnal flowers, almost, I may truly say, without hope or fear, I awaited his arrival. For excluding as tormentors, useless now when the decision had already gone forth, these passions—by effort of will I summoned to the 'sessions of sweet silent thought' the image of Désirée alone, and her high and holy nature ; all she had been from her dear childhood, all that promise for a hereafter bounded only by eternity.

Da war es gleich als ob der Himmel glänzte ;  
 Mir schien, als wäre nichts mir, nichts entgangen,  
 Als hätt' ich alles, was ich je genossen.

—My own and only love : Désirée ! my darling Désirée !  
 . . . And then, my nurse's words, the 'trust in God', on

my lips and in my heart, I opened the letter. . . . I need no words to tell her answer : the sentence of Anteros, firm, affectionate, final : I have none to tell—could a Spirit say, snatched down from the innermost court of Heaven by his own guardian Angel, what or how was the transition from eternal love to eternal fires ? Adam narrate the loss of Eden ? A mother the death of her only child, plague-struck in its flower of beauty, precious beyond words in life, and after death mourned in a silence profound as that of the grave to which she bears her affection ? She sits by meanwhile, she holds the little hands in hers, she feels the dear warmth ebbing : the hours strike : her bitterest grief, all perhaps she can remember hereafter through many years (it was mine), is to know she was *then* nearer darling than, by the unmerciful severance of distancing time, she can ever be again. . . . We close the door : such things are sacred.

IV Indeed I *could* scarcely tell, if I wished it, how that day passed. When, in later years, towards the conclusion of this sad story,—if conclusion I should call it where the sorrow and the passion in unabated intensity are awaiting the ‘so long impossible Rest,’ if Rest it be,—when, more experienced in the conflicts of Eros and Anteros, again I traversed this Valley of Death, the dreadful passage from hope to despair, all circumstances of that hour remained vividly rememberable : I could measure with an awful distinctness all I had lost, and how lost it. But now, though master sufficiently of self to resume my daily formal tasks, it was beneath a vague sense of change so vast and all-affecting, that I seemed in a phantom world, where the light had faded from the sun, the blue blanched itself from

the sky, no true existence left, God's curse standing forth in colossal form alone, and disrealizing His universe into shadowy annihilation. And as we read of a man stunned by one overwhelming blow, who, in his trance, hears voices around and those imploring him to give some sign of life, and can give no sign, but is carried living to the pit ; so, throughout this and many days succeeding, was it with me. Then, during moments beyond control, came back the pure thought of her utter dearness with a sword's-thrust as it were and trenchancy of ineffable anguish, with the ' tears that bring no healing ', the corroding hunger of the heart. When night returned, and solitude, solitude, which during day-time and the enforced mastery of myself in others' presence had been the one wish surviving, fell beneath the curse also. Désirée haunted me there still, and ah ! whither should I fly from her presence ? I was appalled by the unsympathy of Nature ; in the madness of misery I was fain to throw a grappling-hook over the round moon, and drag her from her course, and it surprized me that the stars kept their stations in heaven.

V Beneath this heavy blindness and anarchy of soul three or four months went by, where, and how occupied, I am entirely and finally unable to remember. In whatever spots within England, or elsewhere, what seemed my presence may have been, they knew me not : I was meanwhile wandering on eternally over Sahara ; within the whole horizon circle nothing but the white flame of a Libyan sky, the fierce lashless eye of the sun, the long currents of tremulous hissing sand blown before me like mist by the Sarsar wind, and the shadow which, contracting and dilating, marked what in the world without was the passage of living

hours. No mirage vision gave a moment's delusive happiness : no reasoning on the past, no thought of blame or of requested mercy, no regret for action or for delay, no sense of deserved punishment and of remorse, the last comfort spared even in the abyss, relieved by interrupting that long monotony of desolation. All I recollect of outward life is that meanwhile I must have pursued my common employments in silence and with what calm I could, 'blindly recognizing with terror the absolute nothingness of any human sympathy ; going about, as the great Christian Pilgrim has described in some memorable pages (for all conflicts of the soul bear a deep inter-resemblance) amongst men and women and happy children under bright sun and laughing sky, and yet an insuperable and everlasting wall of severance betwixt me and them, and in my ears the sentence of condemnation ringing. ' Sure, thought I, I am forsaken ' of God : sure I am given up to the devil. And thus I ' continued a long while, and now my heart was exceeding ' hard : if I would have given a thousand pounds for a tear, ' I could not shed one ; no, nor sometimes scarce desire to ' shed one. I would cry with pangs after God, that He ' would be merciful unto me ; but then I would think that ' God did mock at these my prayers, saying, and that in the ' audience of the holy angels,—This poor simple wretch ' doth hanker after me, as if I had nothing to do with my ' mercy but to bestow it on such as he. Alas, poor soul ! ' how art thou deceived ! It is not for such as thee to have ' favour with the Highest. And now was I both a burden ' and a terror to myself ; now was I weary of my life, and ' yet afraid to die. Oh ! how gladly would I have been ' anybody but myself ! anything but a man, and in any con-

'dition but my own ! but, alas ! wishings were now too late ; this thought had passed my heart,—God hath let me go, and I am fallen. Oh ! thought I, *that it was with me as in months past—as in the days when God preserved me !*

VI John Bunyan found Grace Abounding at length, and peace in the faith of forgiveness for fancied sins, in the removal of real wretchedness. But for me—was it sin that I had so loved Désirée ? Where was the wrong, where the error, what the cause of this great calamity ? Before long such inquiries forced themselves before my heart with voices of irresistible command : the stunned stupor passed ; and, with regranted consciousness, a thousand fearful thoughts bore down upon me as it were in leagued and shouting battalions, arrayed for the warfare of the Spirit.

That whenever I had spoken the same result awaited me, from the perfect sincerity and frankness of Désirée, I could not doubt. She had borne herself always with an equable sisterly affection, untarnished by time or circumstance ; this was what she would give ; she was, I had long exulted in the conviction, not less exempt from chance action and mutability, clogs (as the Poet said) of the soul in her soaring, than from the least shadow of even those pardonable littlenesses, the '*soavi disdegni e soavi ripulse*', derogations too frequent from the absolute truth and ideal greatness of Love. But now—alas ! for that strong simplicity which seemed to leave no hope for the blessing of change ! I said to myself 'No hope, none' : yet while thus surrendering Paradise, knew that, call it desire or despair, in that ineffaceable sweetness with which every thought of

Désirée came united, there was hope still, even in the heart of hopelessness.

Why, then, followed the obstinate questioning,—and none more humiliating or painful can perhaps arise,—to what error, defect, or accident must I trace this great misery, this deviation from what appears almost more natural than a law of nature—love returned for love given ?

But the answer, if more than that ' it cannot be otherwise ' , is known to her only. Truth, or affection, or generosity, would never permit her to assign as conducive to this result that unworthiness on his part, which the writer, on just grounds, and with the strongest sense of its existence, would confess of course was a more than sufficient reason, were it not almost ludicrously inconsistent to plead this reason in a narrative which records at the same time that he held himself in the most real sense, worthy of Désirée. Indeed this common paradox of love, mutual confessed unworthiness, was at no time urged between two souls, who knew each other and each other's love of the directest truth, too well to think such profession needful to strengthen compliment, or to account for defeat.

Nor, on the other hand, was there any shadow of comfort in that other suggestion of the distracted heart—suggestion rejected almost when conceived, that this long affection had been misplaced on one who could not return it. Has she been fickle, I could have said, such is woman's nature : base, I could have buried personal pain in pain for her. But that curse, bitterer than the frenzy of love, which the disheartened poet in his sad irony proclaims the true, the inevitable close of passion, when ' charm by charm unwinds which robed our idols ', whether in the mercy or

the further wrath of Providence, was not reserved for me. Even now, inexperienced in the unwavering affection by which Désirée, through many later years, was destined in some degree to console the desire thus made more desiring, I knew but too well that here, at least, had been no self-deception. To have believed her in the faintest degree unequal to such return had she found me worthier, would have been, in truth, to destroy for myself the very power of believing. If there were one thing sure on this wandering and changeful earth, it was this fair creature's noble nature. Nay, there seemed a secret selfishness—a something not knightly and heroic in *any* consideration of this character. As a great teacher said of true love towards God, was not mine also to be given for love's own sake, and without thought of return? What bond had I thus on Désirée? And yet—

VII In the silences of the night, during wakefulness, so rare and prized in youth when I could lie still with a thousand thoughts of Désirée, this warfare now raged within my soul, and I strove against self in the madness of the moment. There is some truth, I cried, in the conventional phrases we find in real and imaginary narratives :—ungrateful, cold, cruel-hearted : some possibility in what books teach, the transference of passion to another, some happiness surely in the after-love which (the experienced assure us) most men find refuge in for life—some folly at least in an eternity of unrewarded persistence. Weak heart, surrender this idle longing ; unfix affection from a thing so far above ; manfully resign the unattainable ; seek consolation elsewhere ; love her less. . . . O voice of little faith and faint-heartedness ! counsels of cowardice disguised in worldly wisdom ! O if an angel had spoken thus



from heaven, I could not have prized her less utterly : this one answer was all-sufficient; Désirée's inseparable dearness.

Fatal intimacy supplied many remembrances, some already recorded, each enough to justify an affection for which one life, prolonged even to patriarchal limits, would have furnished, I thought, an inadequate extension. At this time, walking alone at midnight over level sea sands, where the waves in their relapse left a momentary mirror starred with blue phosphoric spangles or glistening with an uncertain and ghostly moonlight, I reviewed often the years of desire, not only in the great periods of crisis, La Collina or the Moselle-side ascent, but in their lesser and even more pathetic interspaces. There, successive proofs of Désirée's sisterly and unforesightful affection—gifts given without significance, or reproofs without fear, pleasures shared till pleasure, humiliated at its own sweetness, passed into pure heart-thankfulness ; or, dearer still, assistance sought in her perplexity, confidence reposed in sorrow (the touch of Nature beyond all others affecting), had each in turn raised Love through so many thousand gradations, that the series of his possible ascension appeared of more than stellar infinity. Men who have forgotten, or never felt, tell us of the consolations of Nature, the excellent lessons of her teaching : but what relief *could* it be, set against this endless exile from the only love, if, indeed the stars in the poet's phrase, ' were going lightly with their ' golden feet over heaven, fearing to awaken earth ', if ocean murmured peace ?

What end was here to my complaint ?

This haunting whisper made me faint

' More years had made me love thee more '.

Rather, there was something fearful—a stroke of super-human irony, in the calm I could not share, and the power which could not save me. For with these remembrances came the further conviction, how vast the loss, how cruel and unmitigated the punishment. It seemed I was living a posthumous existence—a buried and phantomatic life, where the constellations above me were the ghastly wisps and exhalations hung from the roof of some charnel-vault, and the moon a white face of mockery—the arch of heaven, from horizon to zenith, did not appear a sepulchre too large for such a sorrow. And then, whilst spectral voices were calling the Lost ! Lost ! I heard, perhaps, the ‘ measured ‘ pulse ’ of shoreward oars, and the sailors’ animated Oi-oi cry.—I was in presence of the stern activity of life ; I felt the strange compassion some readers will have probably experienced for personal calamity, an almost fierce and passionate regret for my own ruined early energy, for the youth I remembered as half divine ; for the manly hopes and wholesome aspirations once centred on an aim so true and high, that every other earthly pursuit, compared with this, seemed aimless. I could have wept for pity for the lost self, hardly less than for the lost Herzallerliebste.

VIII But *vivendum dum vivendum*. Divine dawning follows the night of the longest wakefulness : Aurora, who now in place of her natural brightness and comfort, brought the immediate sense of central disquiet, of the vacant yearning, the advent of the days which, in the Preacher’s pathetic phrase, ‘ have no pleasure in them ’. That sad experience has been mine since almost uninterruptedly,—early, to wish it late, and late, that it might be early no more ; to ask at rising how I should this day confront

again and endure the 'weight of human hours'; to find at evening that the day had passed, sustained by secret unavowed hope for what could have no accomplishment. Yet if I felt this calamity like a man, it was a duty recognized at once, to bear it manfully; to accept the burden resignedly indeed, but without the selfish hypocrisy of feigned acquiescence, confessing the aim of life lost without compensation, but determined to do the work of life still; if conquered, yet by aid of what resistance I could gather up, undefeated. One of the very few points on which (my trust was) I might not unjustly rank myself with Désirée, was love of truth, and hence aversion from sentimentalism; that enervation at least I would not add to the sick-heartedness of sorrow, or refuse any possible comfort. Ideal aspirations, practical duty, the lessons of nature and of study,—these, while so much had been taken, appeared much abiding: until years had passed could I detect the latent hope which underlay and animated all? or know that when Hope died, these also, falling into sepulchral darkness, would part with every trace of consolation: books, life, and nature alike vanity, the diversions of pleasure, and the 'rewards of conscience'? Reserving for later record the larger lessons of sorrow, I shall add here only, in final reference to my own special sphere of life, that I now entered and without interruption pursued a profession of practical, often of immediate and sensible, usefulness; not over-monotonous, or over-varied; and leaving intervals for many distant wanderings, which however were not, like two former journeys already noticed, equilinear with that pilgrimage through the world within the heart which I have beguiled some hours by recording.

IX Désirée's return to London, the central scene of these events, had meanwhile added an active perplexity to the toilsome reconstruction of existence from ruin. When first now I saw the windows of that familiar house ruddy in a winter's twilight, it was as if the ghost of the buried life had appeared with a false glow of former happiness, a smile of transcending mockery. I strove hard to confirm myself in the conviction that the sentence was irrevocable, Anteros lord of the ascendant. Désirée will look with indifference, I said, on the desolation her coldness has wrought. Was it not wisdom, was it not duty, was it not justice to self, to refrain from seeing her? . . . As I thought thus, or tried to think, I had seen her already. We had parted last with smiles and waving hands; but ah! moment of suppressed sighs, of glances which in that moment exchanged the lesson of life, of thoughts too sad for tears,—when a door opened, and suddenly we were face to face. Passion and Poetry have celebrated often the solemn sorrow of utter farewells; but are there not meetings even more poignantly cruel? When during youth, in street or company, I had chanced on the fair child, often, to borrow the Homeric phrase painting that sudden influx of vital dissolution when the death-mist fell upon some warrior, a power stronger than Death had 'loosened my knees': it is not beyond truth to say (and I have Dante's authority for transference of the passage to the circumstances of pure *human* passion), that in such instants of surprise Désirée's countenance seemed as the sun shining in his strength, and, like the recluse of Patmos before the great Dominical apparition, I could have fallen at her feet as dead. Not less profound was the emotion of this other instant; but now,

so radically changed was every thought save one, that I wondered to see no sign of some all-pervading alteration in the bright eyes and hair : I declare, when Désirée spoke, it astonished me as I heard the ' dear dear voice ', deepened as we met by sudden surprize, resume its own natural blitheness.

Alas ! one passes through these things, and lives. Her presence asserted its inseparable attraction : again and again the ancient spirit drew my feet thither : it terrified me to find that, with the profoundest renunciation of hope, I loved her still no less. Once, of course, an hour came when the written dialogue of Anteros and Eros was repeated with more solemn and tender earnestness ; when Désirée, renewing the promise she never declined from for an instant, true sisterly affection, warned me with tears, that not for her sake, but mine, separation would be the best wisdom ; when I gave the promise of obedience, and returned next morning to obey, by breaking it, that something in Désirée more powerful and persuasive than Désirée herself. Was this indeed folly ? If so, the world's contempt would not have moved me there. He surely has ' tasted love with half his mind,' who could repay coldness with coldness, scorn with scorn, or hasten to transfer allegiance. Would that be a true affection, which, forswearing itself, in Shakspeare's phrase ' bends with the ' remover to remove ' ? which, while professing to have followed an impulse beyond all spontaneous and irresistible, has yet been given only with a tacit preconvention it shall be returned ? Was it in *that* direction the manly course lay ? O no : however resigned to despair, it was truer manliness to be honest to the real self, ' ahora y siempre ', ' feal and

‘leal’, to love her still for her own dear sake—and indeed, with Luther, I could no otherwise. Nor again, turning to the voices from within, if any counselled surrender, the child’s heart beat an answer within the man ; some inarticulate oracle rose up to repel such dereliction, to whisper that God himself, it seemed, in full conclave of creation, could not afford me another Désirée.

X This was best, and I sat by her side awhile, wondering often if it was I, and under what strange license, who sat there, or which the unreal thing—the happy past, rich in hope and a thousand gracious memories, or that other (it is past now also), where the room, littered with the toys or dresses of the little ones, careless servants coming and going, and, by fireside or window, the bright familiar faces, accents to their least modulation remembered from childhood, appeared each in its turn phantomatic from the sense that in so much that was dear I had no authentic portion : a sojourner for the hour in Eden : a stranger in the heart of home. Then at such hours the old self would seem to revive : these at least, if not pleasure, gave the visionary feeling nearest. Désirée’s least words and gestures—all about her—her features, and her dress, all were, if possible, endeared further by the knowledge that, as I could no longer in any sense regard them *mine*, they were *hers* but the more exclusively. I knew her so well, often I could detect slight differences in her bearing,—a train of conversation dropped, an over-mirthfulness repressed ; a more watchful and eager sympathy in language ; signs of affectionate anxiety to save me (but I was not to be saved) from too vivid a sense of fate, of what had ‘stepped between heart and heart’, since the childly intercourse of which

this was the continuation. Tears, if tears, as in the unashamed heroic days, were now the natural expression of manly sorrow, I might justly have shed over the strange pathos of these meetings : the irrepressible delight and airiness of heart which, even so circumstanced, I could not avoid sharing,—a halo, almost materially sensible, thrown over me from her brightness ; the generous forbearance, the frank affection, the unabated confidingness of Désirée ; the security of ‘ household hearts ’, the community of interests preserved unbroken ; the blithe smiles of irresistible contagion, the pity that seemed almost love . . . whilst glancing even at these things, it is hardly that I restrain them.

In lines of that aethereal beauty which, beyond any other of the sons of song, was his inheritance, Shelley has expressed these feelings. Désirée truly gave me what was ‘ more dear from her than love from another ’. Yet with her inherent liveliness and that ready welcoming of new acquaintances already noticed, which, without impairing her fidelity towards older friends, was not without some injurious reaction upon her judgment, hardly, even after all she knew, I think, did she recognize this unwavering constancy, or do justice to that inability to love her less with which God and Nature and Experience, for my own misfortune, had gifted me. And on my part, meanwhile, I perhaps deceived her by the transient glory of delight with which I was transfigured in her presence : the smiles I smiled at myself, when I had left her, with a double bitterness. Nor were these the only confusing elements in that renewed intercourse.

XI The world’s scorn (and by the ‘ world ’ he does not

here imply strangers and insufficient judges only), the writer is well aware, attends constancy in passion, so long and so hopeless as that here recorded. There is a justice in this verdict : it arises from a tacit sense that, by such unchanging persistence, man sets himself in opposition to Nature. Nature, I have often feared, is in league with the baseness of our blood against fidelity. There is at least a distraction which at last supervenes on long unconvinced despair, and although consistent with perfect sanity of soul, appears to shake the mind from its balance with superstitious imaginations, with a strange credulous incredulity.

To such a hope, the all and the everything of life, and to such sorrow, truly I knew not what was, or was not possible. I regretted the time when incantations, when personal prowess, when the trial of many years in regions of glamour rewarded Agrican or Amadis with the prize of loyal faith. I looked round for miracles : I would have accepted omens. To such depths may despair compel sanity. Once driving late homewards from a scene of unshared festive cheerfulness, I remember that a straw lying at my feet glittered in the occasional lamplight, and seemed to demand attention. I took it up ; it shaped out the letter T : I fancied this expressed some hint or prophecy, and held it long, endeavouring to read the explanation. I wondered if with this straw the first letter of her name could be formed : in a moment I bent it to that figure : I was astonished at the facility with which this lifeless thing adopted the desired shape, and threw it down in a certain terror. As he passed a turnpike, I heard my driver call out the *number* for that evening. This appeared another augury: I transposed the figures into the correspondent letters of a



numerical alphabet I had learned in childhood, and hoped that here at least, by the ordainment of Chance or Providence, might be some elucidation of a future, in which I could discover no sign of happiness by the horoscopy of reason.

Night repeated the visions of day with deeper intensity : it surprized me that I should discover the full force of a passion already so all-paramount over waking life, when wandering in the shadowy land and amongst the creations of ' divine Oneiros '. Others, doubtless, with myself, will have felt this, and can witness to the truth of De Quincey's observation, that ' psychological experiences of deep suffering or joy first attain their entire fulness of expression 'when they are reverberated from dreams.' Conformably to this law, at times the vision presented fancied slights, the contemptuous criticism of spectators, acts of petty cowardice or gaucherie on my own part, with a vividness and exaggeration which made even waking consciousness less uncomfortable. I was wandering through the trees of the ' Tesoretto', which seemed set now by whispering and languid waves ; and although I never saw the sun, his light was the more spread around with a pure amber radiance, as though diffracted, and (if I may restore the word to its etymological sense) electricized by its passage through deep sea waters. Every one's dreamland probably has its landscape, and this was mine :

And all was interfused beneath  
With an Elysian glow,  
An atmosphere without a breath  
A softer day below.

But something seemed unsupplied ; and then I would see

Désirée walking with sisters and friends, and when I came near she moved aside or answered in chilly words, and appeared to turn towards some other (whom I hated without recognizing, and that with a mean and dispiriting hatred) and give him my happiness. In varying forms this phantasmal drama beset me often ; and when I woke the worst misery was, ignorance how far the dream might not be a true ' spiritual presentiment ', a refraction from a yet unseen and rising calamity.

XII If such be the sleep of the grave, that last repose is little worth the coveting. But there were torments worse than the visions of pain. Once, years after, the dream, clothing itself in the circumstances of romantic pageantry, once at this time in the not less affecting circumstances of common life, mocked me with the irony of impossible blessedness. Nay by this illusory power actual scenes and words otherwise forgotten were recalled, I do not doubt, and fixed for ever in the memory ; for enfranchised by sleep from Time and from Space, the soul, in Heracleitus' phrase ' diffused into the surrounding ', visits the past and the distant, and the spirit vindicates its spirituality. Reserving for its proper place that later vision (to which I attempted to give metrical form), I shall narrate the other here : hardly less than many of the facts of life, it is part of my story. •

Some one was at my side ; there was one instant of uncertainty who she was ; then I knew Désirée by her smile, and we were standing together within a courtyard attached to my father's house. But the building opposite, while maintaining its authentic dimensions, form, and arrangements, had undergone change in architectural

features ; for the square doorway had now taken the shape of a Norman arch, like the dark timeworn entrances to Rochester or Richmond castles. Nothing personal was antedated in the dream : I was aware of all that had intervened ; of the lost love, of the surviving and recognized affection—the strangeness, in a word, as I have already described it—of the situation. And so, desirous to speak that I might hear her voice, yet to speak of matters in truth immaterial, I said ‘ My brother and I, whilst boys, amused ‘ ourselves in carving the doorway into that form which ‘ looks so strangely misplaced here, and decorating it with ‘ those Romanesque chevrons ’. Désirée admired the ornaments which seemed rudely cut—a schoolboy’s clasp-knife work, praising our youthful ingenuity with cordial smiles. ‘ A delight half graspable ’, as in Endymion’s enchanted forest, flew above me as she spoke ; and meanwhile the brickwork of the building had converted itself into the rough stone ashlar we see in ancient walls, gaps appeared in the archway, and the gate fell noiselessly as we watched it. But she only smiled again as one unsurprized, and I thought ‘ its work was over : it stood long, and yielded ‘ at last ’. Then we were suddenly within the house, talking with a friend I had not seen for many years, but now lying ill there. Désirée’s animation and affectionate eagerness of sympathy, I felt, secretly increased whilst we spoke ; and as I thought, ‘ It is nothing ; this meeting will end like others : ‘ against all such hopes I must be resolute ’ ; she moved quickly towards a window, and remarked that rain was falling fast, and she feared she must overstay that afternoon with us. ‘ But I will not inconvenience any one ’, she said, looking at me with a smile that ransomed years of regret and

rejection ; ' I will go down and see if the carriage is coming '. And then opening a door, as under impulse of that prior resolve I yet hesitated, she touched my hand ; with hurried words, ' she had something to tell ', or to *such* effect—but they were enough. I looked on her with great terror, wonder, and delight, like Dante when he too saw his Beloved in vision, as I followed Désirée :

Chè dentro agli occhi suoi ardeva un riso  
Tal, ch' io pensai co'miei toccar lo fondo  
Della mia grazia e del mio Paradiso.

XIII We ran lightly down the stairs : the rustling of her dress, the light of her eyes, the sense, so inexpressibly sweet, that she was my entrusted companion, ' we two going ' together ', in the gallant Homer's homely hearty phrase,—these influences as if magically potent raised me to the summit of joy. So it seemed one instant ; but the next, *that* height lay far beneath, as I heard Désirée's words confess to her tacit sense of an absolute unity of interests between us : ' how strange, any one who saw you and me, would think all this '.

Quali colombe dal disio chiamate

with more exultation we pressed onwards, and were alone in a lower room. Beginning as usual without delay, she said, hurriedly, ' It is so long since we have met, you must ' have so much to tell me ; I wish to know all you have ' been doing. . . . And what have I done ? ' she continued rapidly, as if answering a question not uttered, ' O, nothing ' but one's general long series of engagements, you know— ' dinners with duchesses and dowager countesses, and all ' that—Nothing at all, really ; and we are going in the

‘summer to——’ But I, interrupting her before the favour of the moment should pass, and knowing she spoke thus to hide by many words her own thought from herself, ‘You have no need to ask what I have done, or how I have suffered, dear—no relief; no one moment’s peace since last I saw you. What I thought then—what I have thought so long of you, dear, I think still—it must be so’. Désirée smiled, and still playing with herself as with a child, said ‘It was long, indeed, since I had come to visit them’, and then, ‘O! she was so sorry, so very, for the pain—for all that had passed’: and she came close by my side, and turned towards me with all the confiding frankness of the noble and loving nature, and eyes that never looked false from her heart’s meaning. Then, as happens in waking life, a servant’s accidental entrance seemed to bring in the world upon us, with smiles and hasty separation, and the feeling of discovery and innocent delightful shame. Like children, we ran from the room when he left it: We cried, ‘Where can we hide ourselves?’ opening door after door in long unfamiliar galleries, and seeming to find every chamber peopled, until at last we were alone again; and now, something whispered, together in heart so much, that God Himself, by the angel summons of the judgment, could not put us asunder. Returning to Désirée’s last words, I said ‘You know why I have so long refrained from coming: but if, indeed, you wish, if I may, it would be all my pleasure, happiness once more.’ She smiled and pressed my hand, and half spoke and delayed an instant and smiled again, saying, ‘O yes, I trust you will; dear, I am yours’. I put my arms round her: three words, ‘Kiss me, Désirée’, . . . and then—Those who wake at the last minatory

trumpet, and find it hell, will be pierced, I think, by no pang more poignant than mine, when He who gave took away the vision and the blessedness, and I awoke to the knowledge of life-long desolate abandonment. We read in history of the torments wrought by man on man, and are terrified : but, O dreadful Irony of God, with what severities of human invention shall I compare Thee ?

XIV Health of soul and active sorrow, let moralists, at their ease justifying what they consider the ways of Providence, say their will, are things incompatible. Lord Bacon, fallen from his honours, wrote indeed those exquisite phrases :—‘ Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament ; adversity is the blessing of the New, which ‘ carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer evidence ‘ of God’s favour. We see in needle-works and embroidery, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon ‘ a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground. Judge therefore ‘ of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye ’. But it is impossible to believe that the great teacher’s own heart went with this judgment. Wealth, friends, royal favour, national applause, were gone ; but the one mistress he had loved only too well was still left him. Had science been taken, he would have recognized the fallacy of his own graceful comparison, by discovering that there are sorrows which extinguish light altogether, and leave no pleasure possible to the soul’s eye. But in these matters analogical pictures fail to supply real solution : men in earnest will ask further. Misfortune brings no necessary, no inherent blessing. Whatever greatly disturbs the general tenor of

life, is in truth a teacher, and thus far may be the bearer of celestial favours ; but the lesson taught has no virtue in itself—is absolutely dependent for its results on the mind that receives it. This common truism, from which no one, I apprehend, will dissent, is however really incompatible with what has passed into a truism even commoner—the *essential* benefits of adversity. Experience contradicts that doctrine. Worldly blessings have saved many from despair ; the victims of calamity are a crowd beyond human numbering. Religion has been often the child of joy ; sorrow has brought forth sin : the heart's receptivity, ' the readiness ', in Hamlet's phrase, ' is all '. Yet so strongly, during the last few centuries, from causes highly curious but irrelevant to this writing, has a peculiar fashion of thought prevailed, that within the compass of five lines I shall be held proud, irreligious, hardened, for expressing the conviction that the doctrines which may be summed up as ' the higher blessings of adversity ', ' the religion of ' sorrow ', are, as popularly comprehended, not less false in themselves, than, from that falsehood, hostile to true morality. No error can be more natural and complete ; it has arisen from no mysterious depth, no new truth of revelation, no profound consideration of man's earthly circumstances, but simply from the fact that *all* striking events influence human character, and that misfortune is, perhaps, the most markedly common, certainly the most conspicuous and noticeable, of events : it is a fallacy of one-sided observation. Sorrow is common—good from sorrow occasional. Moralists—and all men are moralists—have marked the favourable results, and woven them into a philosophy of consolation. Grief may be disease ; but it is

always practicable to find or fancy that disease has some curative or beneficent purpose. So men moralize. But presently—who has not witnessed such affliction?—by-standers are perplexed in their optimism; death, not recovery, is the result approaching; no blessing can be prophesied or appealed to as the cause, the celestial favour concealed beneath calamity. Then, in last resort, friends will say ‘Submit to the mysterious dispensation; it is a ‘trial’: thinking they have explained what they thereby confess inexplicable. *Causa finita est*: the search for ulterior justificatory reasons hopeless: we can only return to the first question, What are the natural results of that which, disguise it how we will, is in truth one manifestation of the world’s evil? True, that some gain patience through defeat, as the storm which drowns a crew may wash treasure to a cottager; but where are the others? True, that chastisement may seem mercy in a thankful retrospect—a troubled ocean we have escaped from, in contrast with this serene security: but what if the waves close over our heart’s one and only desire? True, that sorrow may bring wisdom; but true also (it is the Wise man who confessed it), that we may buy even wisdom too dearly. Nothing, I have often thought, in the whole aspect of human nature is more touching than the proof the ‘doctrine of sorrow’ presents of man’s invincible and eager instinct for happiness. The eighteen hundred editions of the palliative fallacies which bear the name of Kempis, are each a witness to this passionate desire to find a soul of goodness in things evil at any cost—even at the Moloch sacrifice of forgetting. . . . But I am deviating into the great circle from the sphere of my own private story.



XV The fancy which I have already alluded to as forming one occasional scene in the drama of dreams, had in truth, through this inherent unhealthiness, through the distorting agency of sorrow, taken its place in my waking thoughts. An intimacy renewed against reason and in such conjuncture was marked inevitably by many peculiar circumstances ; and, although foolish, it was natural if at times I read, or thought I read, traces of petty slighting and of coldness in one so dear that I scarcely knew how to seek or how to leave her presence. With shame I own a belief which, as I learned afterwards (could she indeed be untrue to her own nobility ?), was really the reflex of my own littleheartedness. But such suspicions, like birds of bad omen, flew readily through the twilight of the spirit, and gradually darkening into larger and more portentous menace, drove me at length from the recovered blessing of Désirée's society. Then followed a defeat and disorganization of soul, which I recognized as one of the many new and unanticipated evils 'labouring up' in the rear of that primary, and as I had once imagined, exhaustive stroke of sorrow. I was constrained to put to the proof the celebrated 'doctrine of renunciation', to find it another of the eloquent sophisms by which men strive to bring Necessity itself within the governance of human Free Will. Though taught by Goethe, and reiterated by Carlyle,—better not to be, than have recourse to that selfish and suicidal remedy.

Now the continuity of life appeared broken ; the golden cord of love loosed ; now I seemed to die once more, to be born again to a new life, in which Désirée had no portion, in which I passed months without intelligence of one, from whom a day's separation had been once my severest earthly

trial. The delusion of an ultimate recoverable compensation returned : freed from the folly of vain hope, from the worship of a self-created idol, I would make a reckless and desperate dash for happiness ; would acquiesce in the dictates of Providence, forget what I could not win, fight no longer against the stars, rest from that eternal chase of passion, take the wiser practical part, and be a man. Bitter irony ! These counsels, although antagonistic absolutely to what has been already noticed as the popular ‘ doctrine of ‘sorrow’, yet are not less popular, nor sustained by preachers less authoritative ; nay, often by the same who lately, during the first pressure of any friend’s affliction, bid him deduce the lessons of the vanity of life and the blessing of chastisement. Such well-intentioned advisers were not wanting now. It was a duty, I was told, a Christian duty, to be happy : to shake off those unthankful (so they said), unpractical, and morbid feelings ; to submit, forget, and be consoled. Former trials, the inner voices, my own conscience might with justice have led me to doubt the validity of these conclusions : but I was resolved to neglect no chance ; and to give Nature all avenues for escape and restoration possible, not to waste life on one sigh, became now my careful and eager endeavour. I threw myself with energy into the active duties of my profession, for friends said with a smile, *that* was an unfailing curative. I took up again every thread of my former rational interests in art and science, studies and poetry, and thought these clues would lead me forth securely from the Daedalaean labyrinth of regret and passion. But it was not so ; at the best, (to confess a truth equally sad and unpopular), they were but transitory distractions. How should they be other-

wise ? Knowledge is no end in itself ; action cannot affect passion, a thing not of contrary, but quite alien nature ; conscience does not restore love. Do what we will, and how we will, the ghosts return ; the ' night of loss is always ' there ' ; the sore heart-wasting unhealed ; the love unsatisfied. However wise, the world's wisdom, whilst it brings palliatives, can bring no cure. But I *would* not believe this without honest trial.

XVI It is, again, no unfrequent remark, and writers popular in part through such arguments have strenuously sanctioned it, that the physical spirits by proper manipulation may be made a balance to the mental ; that there are few spectres of heaviness which will not fly before energy and frank healthful exercise. I gladly believe this often realized, but if so, it can hold true of superficial sorrows only. Diversion may do much, when vital hope, under whatever disheartenment survives ; when this is gone, we have lost the fixed aim which gave animation and meaning to diversion. I at least could find no parallel in kind or in remedy between the desolation of the lost love, and the grief which may be landed with a salmon line, or the remembrances that are distanced by a racer. These things cannot restore life. They are one anodyne more with which friends and moralists flavour and disguise the draught of Lethe. Here, too, I may claim to speak from deliberate experience. Returning in a disguise of gladness to the society of friends, I now shared again in bright contests of wit and gaiety, in the fascinations of flood and field, and found often at first that by the precious contagion of friendship, by the force of youth, I too became what I seemed.

There is a charmed narrow circle into which every man who has passed through English Army, Academic, or Artist life possesses the happy privilege of entrance, where, amidst friends of equal age, pursuits, and familiarity, through the absolute unreserve of youthful years heart has become known to heart for little and for great, worse and better. Amongst such for some hours together, perhaps in the dim recesses of a London tavern, perhaps by burnside or lake, 'the heavy and the weary weight was lightened', and the mind carried away from that too obstinate yearning after *Désirée* to matters which, in the felicitous language of Augustine, seized it the rather, '*colloqui et corridere, et vicissim benevole obsequi, simul legere libros dulciloquos, simul nugari, et simul honestari; dissentire interdum sine odio, tanquam ipse homo secum, atque ipsa rarissima dissensione condire consensiones plurimas*': 'to talk and laugh together, and yield kindly attention by turns, together to read delightful books, trifle at once and be serious, dissenting at times without passion, as self might from self, and by such dissension,—and that even, how unfrequent! giving relish to our general unity'. Looking back to some of these hours, it might be said, I think, that we sought for truth with courageous and open hearts, and often found it. In such companies again, all had hope: the happy, for more happiness, and the disappointed had hope yet; none could acknowledge their star sunk, or horizon darkened irretrievably. Has it not been said, when night is darkest dawning is nearest? I caught the favour of the moment, and believed that the bitterness of death was passed.

XVII Or perhaps, (to notice the final phase of that

illusory alleviation,) within a certain house, planted in the broad tranquillity of a northern lake-valley between hills on which the double consecration of Nature and of Wordsworth has rested, one dear friend received me with shouts of welcome, repeated by an exulting Newfoundland, and softened into gentler tones by female voices. It was a family of which, through the contagious virtue of college companionship, I became at once an integral member. Then, as if in some great city rich in relics, followed walks where so joyous was the pace that we seemed flying from happiness to happiness, and every mile was signalized by the sight of memorials, unknown and yet familiar :—the ‘ Pillar ’ over Ennerdale, the central point of tragic interest in Wordsworth’s most perfect poem ; the rock above Rotha, which ‘ like something starting from a sleep ’, echoed with our laughter again ; or that eminence which the poet celebrated in verse of unusual colour and passion :—

’Tis in truth

The loneliest place we have among the clouds.  
And She who dwells with me, whom I have loved  
With such communion, that no place on earth  
Can ever be a solitude to me,  
Hath to this lonely Summit given my name.

As upon a splendid August evening I repeated these lines, looking on ‘ Stone Arthur ’, and beside me a fair young creature, loving and confiding already to her brother’s friend,—for one moment that rock seemed to regain the charm it held over Wordsworth, and ‘ send its own deep ‘ quiet ’ to the restoration of the heart and of home happiness. Mercy, I thought, had come, though late ; an authentic blessing, though not the one so long desired, in the

sight of Infinite Wisdom a better, perhaps, was granted. . . . Must I record that this too was another irony ? I could smile as I remember how the vision ended. For, next evening, when, with a growing and enheartened sense of interest and of familiarity I was standing by the same spot, another friend who had joined us a few hours before from London, suddenly remarked, rather as a man who hints at well-known things than as the bringer of news, ' You have ' heard it of course,—*Désirée* is married '.

XVIII Then, even after the trial of so many years, I knew first how dear she was ; I may truly say I grow cold beneath the grasp and fascination of that image which, like the phantom maid of Corinth, appeared suddenly after burial to recall the lover to his earlier faith. Before this ' high instinct ' I trembled ' like a guilty thing surprized ' : I was conscience-smitten of *Désirée*. O tremendous irony of the revelation, which, disclosing torments hitherto unimagined and that seemed to come like hell-hounds from the abyss, presented also the vision of *Désirée* glorified and enhaloed with a more perfect and absolute dearness ! A lifetime could not have stamped the conviction of this with more force than that one moment. It shone upon my soul with a lightning-flash : what, I saw with terror, would be that I was seeking at another's side, but a deceit, treacherous and shameful—a spiritual adultery ? Further argument here was superseded by simple emotion. At the thought of the Lady of the Heart that incipient insurrection was arrested, as the half-revolting soldier takes step in the ranks and marches shouting towards death, when the colours of his battalion are unfurled suddenly before him. A sad knowledge, I knew myself before it was too late : and deeply

thankful for the seasonable warning, even with its inscrutable and complex bitterness, I was glad to accept the truth ; better so, better Hell itself,—and if ever the phrase may justly be allowed, I might so call that hour's sensations,—than a life of acted faithlessness.

And yet that a hopeless remembrance should assert such enslaving power, was terrible ; it appeared like the realization towards myself of that fearful fate which in the belief of the great tragedians of Athens or the greater than Athenian poet of Macbeth, lowered in irresistible dominance alike over king and peasant. Such tragedies, I may add, if the reference appears to any one ostentatious, require neither palaces nor temples, the bath of Mycenae or the halls of Forres, for accessory circumstances of elevation ; may be not less real or romantic to-day, in the most fashion-fluttering thoroughfare of London, than when Job lamented in the land of Uz, or Oedipus sat forlorn by the grove of the Furies. In the narrow orbit of mortal passion and destiny, all scenes reproduce themselves : Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, as Dante saw them, are framed and gathered into circles. Like the desolate Phaedra led forth for one look more on the beauties of Troezenian landscape and then borne back to death, I too, beneath a rock whence ' holy waters ' ran from their glistening fountain ', beneath the slowly gathering paleness of crystalline sky, and birds that swam ' through the liquid summer ', all things full of life and loveliness,—found myself torn from the new last hope, cast out from the consolations of Nature, and mastered by an unseen phantom, that ' something dearer than life, hid ' from sight in clouds by embracing darkness '. Thus an ancient scene was now re-enacted : but every successive

half-hour forced on me some new aspect of this revolution. When, returning towards the house, the village postman met us, and the girls ran quickly forward, the Archangel of the Annunciation himself, I thought, could not now place within his hands a letter I should care to take from them. Everything in that house spoke of days of happiness past, and days to come expected with wise confidence : but what hope had I now for years and years and years ? I was never to have again for an hour what they had for all their lives ! . . . . Yet I must drive the one thought from me, I felt, by almost physical effort ; I threw myself into the tumult of household gaiety with mad eagerness ; until the long day waned, until I was able to relinquish the foolish effort, and be once more in the unrestraint of solitude with what I knew now must be, in *every* sense, the passion of life. I learned afterwards, that those dear friends remarked no change in my bearing or countenance ; they believed me happy. Alas ! Happy those, who do not survive such hours.

XIX To that evening I must look back as one of the rare crises of existence. In narrating I shall methodize, perhaps, the disordered and tumultuous array of thought ; but I may truly say that within the compass of a few hours I made a long advance towards the end,—that I devoured years of life. The sun, when I left my friend's house, must have fallen, in Milton's majestic reckoning, ' beneath ' Azores ' : it was the darkest interval of the summer's night, the pause between the setting and the rising of Hesperus, during which the faint after-line of sunlight (on any perfect sea-horizon almost continuous at such seasons with the dawning), was here hidden by the mountain



barrier of the valley ; whilst the stars came forth few and feebly, seeming to rest in some divine languor upon the loftiest summits, or as if they could foresee the moon's ascending chariot from the vantage stations and battlements of heaven. The path I chose had been reserved for another day's expedition, as conducting to the central scenery, the grandest gorge of the district. But in this weak light I could perceive only that vast mountain masses stood round me like giants. No definite way was traceable, and as a guide to my steps I took the torrent, and tracked it upwards by the sound through the valley. Soon the last of a few scattered cottages was behind. I felt a sense of freedom in the consciousness of solitude, as if thought and desire could at length follow their bent, and take an illimitable expansion ; as if now, once more it might be, and for an everlasting farewell, I could stand face to face with the lost love. Wild scents, the thyme crushed under foot, the larch on the vale-side,—exhaled always more freely during the darkness, spread themselves, as an essence in pure spirit, through the fresh dews and vaporous air :—they recalled the words of a great poet, comparing his own thoughts, and justly, with these perfumes of nature. ‘ Go forth,’ he said, wandering in his youth through the enchanted Hartz Forest, ‘ Go forth, and beyond the mountains seek for my well ‘ beloved. She is arest already, and sleeping : at her feet ‘ angels kneel, and when she smiles it is a prayer which ‘ they take up and murmur. In her bosom lies heaven ‘ with all its happiness, and when she breathes, far off my ‘ heart trembles. The sun is couchant behind her eyelids ; ‘ when they open it will be day ’ :—day for *another* ! . . . who I had not cared to ask. Another ! Even the sick

sadness of the months preceding, the moment of first rejection, appeared felicity itself : times when I was nearer Désirée. I, who had then mentally accused her of coldness, could think of her now only as utter dearness. I seemed to see her sunny bright as in days long past ; I cried for her with the first fire of love, *con qual sete, con che ostinata fede, con che lagrime !* Had I then honoured her so long, to this ending ? Was this the answer to the years of faith and hope ?

Ah ! se non è chi con pietà m'ascolte,  
Perchè sparger al ciel sì spessi preghi ?

I might look up to the great hills around, but no help thence ; above them, and God had retreated into the infinite. Why this ineffable pain added ? To what purpose torture laid on torture ? How have I sinned, I cried aloud, that I should thus be punished ?

I stood still in silence for an answer ; I looked at one dark summit, and commanded it in my heart to move : there might be pity in nature ; I would take it for a sign. . . . And then, in the solitude which had seemed absolute, I heard a sound like the last pulsations of some ebbing life, the measured beats of a mill-wheel, interrupted often by water-gushes, on the torrent side. I started to see red light glowing through the windows of a rude cottage, and heard within careless home-happy voices, and one that sang words I could not follow.

XX This human presence so near checked the madness of complaint, the tears which in their anguish appeared almost tears of blood, the foolish faith that looked for miracles. Without further thought—for the way was steep and difficult—I walked quickly on, whilst glen narrowed to

ghyll by many wild gradations, until the torrent broke down at last from a bare mountain side which barred further progress. Not long after midnight a luminous haze, projected on the white cloud that edged one of the higher summits, and arching into prismatic halos, announced the rising moon. Presently she cleared the sky around her : ' Bientôt elle répandit ce grand secret de ' mélancolie, qu'elle aime à raconter aux vieux chênes et ' aux rivages antiques des mers '. Now the whole circle of that strange landscape was defined. Down the valley I saw, in a distance not before visible, angry summits specked with snow ; nearer, in an opening gorge, vast upward-pointing masses, rushing precipitately below into heaped and shivered desolation ; ruins, they might have been, of Titanic palaces and the towers raised to scale heaven. A serrated ridge, half curve, half keenness, led up hence to the extreme cliff which bounded this Valchiusa, a wall of exquisite grey, mapped out by long runlets glistening in their slow diffusion over the precipice ' naked as a tower ' ; whilst one great prism of sheer rock shot up high over all, glaring under the moonbeams as if cast in untarnished and celestial silver. When I turned towards the moon, the powdery flood of light, pouring over an abyss of shadow cast from the jagged line of southern crags, fell heavily on my face : it seemed to penetrate me with emanations borne from some world beyond the world, with influences of fairy fantasy, and feelings of vague voluptuousness. Not in vain did the wise of ages, unsophisticated by our complex and distracting civilization, hold the belief that by some weird inexplicable charm Nature is dominant over man ; that by mysterious links the universe maintains its unity. That

imaginative Pantheism which is the reverential worship of this Power, underlies the civilization of Christendom ; when it breaks forth, it chooses no mean votaries, conscious or unconscious, Goethe, Shelley or Wordsworth, for its reassertion. And it is in the heart of the hills that this spiritual gravitation grasps us most forcibly. . . . But better not attempt to paint in words that visionary gleam ; to frame a description of what is rather hinted to the soul than amenable to the senses ; to teach the lessons of solitude in the language of cities.

XXI Whatever it be, there is however a ' presence not ' to be put by ' amongst the mountains. The hours appeared at once calmer, yet fuller in thought than their wont : as if my life were advancing with the unretrogressive earnestness of the starry courses ; as if I breathed in these regions ' by no mortal measurement '. As Wordsworth has somewhere expressed it, I felt separated from my own self : isolated from identity : I could review the past as if belonging to another.

Then, looking back over the many years, I endeavoured to ask the whence and whither of this great calamity. It would be relief, it seemed, to detect some cause, within or without—some sufficient reason. But here I was altogether baffled. Deep as were the obligations I owed to the lofty passion of Lucretian logic, his answer could not be satisfying ; i could not join him in ascribing to any fortuitous aggregation of atoms the spiritual drama of human life. Yet, in a strong certain sense, from the first sight of Désirée to that evening's crisis of final despair, all seemed governed (and I suppose the review of their own past has given many men the same conviction) by some irresistible decree : a

Power I knew not what to call but Fate, or how to imagine otherwise. It seemed I could not escape the destiny of love, or she of indifference ; as the same fountain-head at Gadara in the legend gave birth to Eros and Anteros. If, again, I set this doctrine aside as Fatalism, meaningless or impious, what better Cause remained ? Could I dare name Providence that Power which had, as it were, revenged an affection the most pure and natural by this dreadful despair : had compassed the ruin of life by the curse of constancy ; realized no hope, and relented at no supplication ; and then—last irony and worst—wrung forth the conviction that she when most lost was most most loved—Can the fountain of life, I cried to the less unpitying wilderness, at the same moment give forth sweetness and wormwood ? Were such, indeed, the decrees of the All-Merciful ? Could I ascribe to Him torments seemingly without cause as without consolation—*Désirée* lost here and hereafter, a blow which had cursed the Future through the Past, barred the gates of earth's Eden, and unparadised the anticipations of eternity ?

XXII ' *Jamais ! jamais ! Ah ! quelle parole de fer et de feu !* The tortures fancied by the dreams of the wretched, ' the ever-revolving wheel, the stream which flies from lips ' eternally thirsting, are weak images to express that tremendous thought—the Impossible and the Irreparable '. By its very depth this defeated all that searching for the cause ; and I turned resolutely from inquiries which seemed necessarily to lead to folly or to madness, to ask what hope or method for the conduct of life might be found in submission. I called the ' many consolatories writ ' before memory in their sad sequence, the anodynes of all the ages ; I endeavoured to weigh these with what calmness

and truth I could ; to cast aside every self-deception, every mirage, however fair, which the soul, longing by most natural impulse for happiness, creates and believes substantial ; to ask the last secret of sorrow ; be insensible to no relief, and blench before no consequences, if (and they are so) all consolations should prove vanity.

What help was it to know that the universe was vast ? my own misery an infinitesimal atom in the 'summa rerum' ? that empires had fallen, nations wasted away ? What, that others had suffered more, the feeble '*non tibi hoc soli*' rejected by the philosopher ; that such was the lot of man, the common order of things, the consequence of Adam's ambition ? That life was short, why complain, wait only, a few years will end all ? To state these consolations is truly to proclaim their impotence. We may not say the men who wrote thus had never suffered : but when they wrote, the bitterness of death was surely past. The moralists had regained that happiness which they affect to value so lightly, and would now fain stifle enquiries irreconcilable with optimism, and sorrows which, as the spectacle of Lazarus to Dives, are repulsive to the high pride of their felicity.

I classed with this teaching the querulous moral inculcated by the latest prophet, Carlyle's apostrophe to man, 'Fool ! who said you should expect happiness ?' Stripped of its quasi-humorous exaggeration, unless violence were strength, there is nothing serious in that argument ; it is just another 'sham' : no one ever believed it. Nor, taking the doctrine literally, could it afford any relief : what I lamented in Désirée was the loss, not of trivial and temporary happiness, the child's paradise derided by Carlyle, but

of God's best acknowledged gift,—of the guide not less than the aim of more years than I now dared number ; one in whose love I had ample reason to know with the sweetest security for blessedness I should have found the law of life.

That we shall die, and forget, or sadder still (to pass on to more serious essays), live, and by conviction of the brief vanity of life, acquiesce in a pious indifference : that the resignation of faith here will receive recompense hereafter. . . . I have heard these lessons often, and from no mean preachers : and yet

—Like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answer'd ' I have felt '.

The mystery of such a loss, was this solved in any way by learning that life is a mere passage, a brief intermediary station ? Was the burden lightened by the knowledge that our days are few, when eternity would not be over long for true affection ? I could not think so slightly of love, poor human love, to take the phrase of a conventional rhetoric, as to esteem his defeat on earth a trifle unworthy regret : I could not dare to say, any eternity would ransom the loss of Désirée. I may seem to have wandered from the story of passion into the sphere of transcendental argument, but it is no real deviation. Matters of earth, ' arrangements of the season ', what I should read in the announcements of the next newspaper, (if we have any knowledge of that country) ramify into the heavens. I thought of that evening's intelligence, and knew that one last vague hope of the latter years must also be vanity. If, like Dante, when by that visionary reunion which dyes even his mystic paradise with the purple light of human

pathos, he consoled, or tried to console the heart-sickness, the 'quanto disio' of life,—I too created my own heaven, this Beatrice might stand on the threshold to irradiate me with a smile of welcome such as would fill the heart with happiness 'amidst the flames of hell'—but could even the most adventurous of prophetic comforters (and they venture far) dare promise I should find the vision realized? The 'larger hope', the 'some strong bond which is to be',—these (not to quote more consecrated phrases), are words full of sound and sweetness; but he who is satisfied with such, is like a mother content during the tempest to go her daily ways, sing, and be glad in the knowledge that her child *may* escape shipwreck. Those only will be consoled thus who stand in no need of solace. Nothing less than certainty can suffice love.

XXIII But further; if not only, as I have said, without such certainty, but almost without such hope, could I find—something already answers No—consolation in the *general* prospect of superterrestrial blessing, to which, by the dictates of what is popularly termed submissive faith (words to the unreflecting in themselves a convincing argument), I was enjoined to look forward and be happy? O 'faith as vague as all unsweet', this mystic conception of heaven! There is nothing in such happiness commensurate with the earthly afflictions it is brought forward to ransom and obliterate. Tears for the lost love here are not really recompensed hereafter by crowns and palms, be they never so amaranthine. There is nothing in this which truly satisfies the heart. Those who employ the words do not *ex animo* believe them: something further is secretly implied. It is true that, contrasting the superiority of their



hope with the dim anticipations of Plato, men often appeal to the general promise of immortality as a convincing proof : but ask the preacher when his child is dying ; ask the confessions of a thousand gravestones—and the truth appears. That belief in itself, and alone, gives but a naked and abstract satisfaction to the best believers. The common feeling of mankind uses it simply as a foundation, a bare scaffolding on which at once affection sets up the long perspective of her aethereal palace, where friend shall meet friend, children rediscover parents, ‘ clasping hands in the ‘ dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity ’, in the reunion of an everlasting home. And yet—let me ask with a most real diffidence—beyond what almost seems the Omnipotence of hope and desire, what warrant is there for an expectation, without which heaven is hardly heaven ? Men may prefer to deceive themselves here, conscious and unashamed, may cry against the cruelty of an iconoclasm which breaks the cherished idol : be it so ; it was but an idol still : to me, truth, if truth, however bitter, cannot but—should be—preferable. If it is argued seriously that a belief now so common, so identified with the idea of Christian immortality, must not be without truth for its foundation, *do manus*, quote the words, allege the reasons. . . . Hope and desire are heard again ; there are none other. Take this holy warrantless wish away, and, to the natural human heart, I suppose, the Lethe of ancient seers, the ‘ draughts of repose and long forgetfulness ’ would appear a better portion. This might be dark, but a darker thought remained. Alas ! for me there was no comfort anywhere—whither should I turn ? new disclosures of despair opened momentarily around me. For, grant this creed

of personal recognition, of household reunion, authentic, and must not the sorrow of to-day pursue me through eternity ? If so, I should accept it as the decree of a pitiless Fate ; I could not acquiesce with thankfulness in the doctrine which said that, losing Désirée here, I should be recompensed by indifference for ever. O, the sick comfort that is here—forgetfulness ! What with entire justice we dread so much as the possible fate of earthly affection whilst those we love are with us, that we hardly permit ourselves to dread it,—was I indeed to hold this shame, in last resort, an essential element of happiness in the long hereafter ?

XXIV Except as recording the whole truth of an individual experience, this narration can be of little value. However unwilling to contravene the judgments of the wise, or meet the ‘darken’d brows’ of Urania, however diffident of his own conclusions, the writer holds it therefore right to record how yet further arguments for hope and solace—arguments obvious, perhaps, to readers already—failed him in support like the reeds of Egypt. It were far easier—in a certain sense much safer, I might say—to follow the general formula which, silencing grief rather than solacing, re-asserts that unchristian doctrine, ‘Partial evil ‘universal good’, under the disguise of ‘thankful submission to a Divine Hand’, which magnifies the human wish for ultimate and all-embracing happiness into the certain law of the Infinite, and frames our future from an idealized past. Assuredly, whilst dissenting from the dear friends, seen and unseen, Wordsworth and Tennyson, Pascal and ——, who, with thousands more, are willing to entrust all final issues to reverent Hope, the writer cannot

but regret a conviction in which the inane longing for originality has no portion, in which, indeed, let him say boldly, he is rather the follower of those, and he cannot hold their humility or their wisdom less,—who have said simply, Here is the Inexplicable. To take the consolation offered is the more attractive, the sweeter course ; but 'Truth, once for all, is unconcerned with 'consoling doctrines'. *That* way, I should be supported by whatever support lies in a majority : but to me, at least, it would not be true ; but I should betray the last and deepest Faith, Conscience.

Men may indeed say, 'All is for the best' : but the feeble optimism, disguised to Christian ears under the current phraseology, 'It is God's world', is disbelieved before spoken, refuted without need to raise the eyes. If it be so, how should such things be done in it ? And is there not another Prince of this world also ? The reasonings of 'Candide' gain nothing by restatement in the terms of theology. Simple acquiescence in what is inevitable lies below that *consolatio usitata*, 'Cease from impatient sorrow. 'It must be for the best. You are in higher hands. He 'gives, and He takes away. It may be true that your loss 'seems the loss of all that makes life worth living : 'tis a 'trial of faith : be sure the chastisement is deserved, or is 'for greater ultimate blessing'. Why use my own, weak words, whilst anxious to give their fullest weight to reasonings from which I cannot deduce the intended moral, when one conspicuous amongst men for the 'love of wisdom and 'the wisdom of love' has devoted a *discours bien consolatif* to this very topic ? Blaise Pascal wrote on his father's death, 'C'est que nous devons chercher la consolation à

' nos maux, non pas dans nous-mêmes, non pas dans les  
 ' hommes, non pas dans tout ce qui est créé ; mais dans  
 ' Dieu. Et la raison en est que toutes les créatures ne sont  
 ' pas la première cause des accidents que nous appelons  
 ' maux ; mais que la providence de Dieu en étant l'unique  
 ' et véritable cause, l'arbitre et la souveraine, il est in-  
 ' dubitable qu'il faut recourir directement à la source et  
 ' remonter jusqu'à l'origine, pour trouver un solide allége-  
 ' ment. Not as chance, not as fatal necessity, not as the  
 ' trick of the elements are we to think of calamity, but as  
 ' an indispensable, inevitable, just, holy, and God-exalting  
 ' consequence of a providential decree : connu de toute  
 ' éternité pour être exécuté dans la plénitude de son temps,  
 ' en telle année, en tel jour, en telle heure, en tel lieu, en  
 ' telle manière :—to see it in God, a thing determined in  
 ' the secret of His will, and to be accepted with thankful  
 ' and adoring silence '. Is it indeed so ? this the last  
 best conclusion of the sweet moralist ?—Fatalism clothed  
 in eloquent phrases : an attempt to refine comfort from  
 resignation to the Inevitable and the Irresistible : to make  
 evil good by a trick of fair speaking ! What proud presump-  
 tion, again, is it, however draped in gracious humility,  
 which thus attempts to solve the ways of Providence, the  
 riddle in more modest moments named mystery,—which  
 refutes the doctrine of Fate by the substitution of everlasting  
 Decree, and then enforces silence with shouts of sophistry ?  
 More courageous to confess, we stand here between con-  
 tradictions hopelessly and fearfully irresoluble. Turn what  
 way we will, far, far beyond the reconciliation of our  
 frivolous mediation, the sky is darkened with antagonist  
 portents—the horizon ' throng'd with dreadful faces ' :

there is still war in heaven. Shall we dare deny the influence of Prince Ahriman over earth ? Shall we dare ascribe unmerited anguish to Eternal Love ? Is it well, if, penetrating the abyss further, we presume to find a reason for human agony in divine glorification ? discover some secret charm in confessing the disfavour of our benefactor ? or fancy, that by a voluntary assumption of sin we can destroy the sting of sorrow ? These positions are frequent in preachers' mouths : but is there any real repose for the heart in this juggle of the intellect ?

XXV ' 'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise ' ; a simple text on which volumes have been written with all that profluence of rhetoric inherent in the literature of consolation. He, however, would hardly be wise who could consider with much satisfaction wisdom won at such sacrifice ; nor could I with any truth allow myself that sad indulgence. Yet I had honestly accepted whatever gain the soul might receive from calamity : I too had long endeavoured ' to catch the far-off interest of tears ', and convert to present amelioration. But, if indeed attained, was such personal benefit in any true sense commensurate with the final loss of ' the One who was my choice of all the world ' ? Could this be set, and against that, in the balance ? or could I complacently build self-improvement on forgetfulness of Désirée ?

Should I, again, join with other moralists, Augustine or Taylor, in their emphatic attempt to make banning blessing ; should I say the deprival was to teach me detachment of the soul from earth, the vanity of mortal things, when that reckoned in the contemptuous censure was the one passion which is most divine—love so spontaneous, strong, and

innocent, that, if any thing, assuredly I might ascribe this to immediate Providential inspiration? I often heard the voice of the scorner—and notably in that shallow monastic mockery of human hope, the falsely-named ‘Imitation’—supporting his disingenuous system with such arguments: but something in the heart above logic refuted the barren impiety, the treason against Heaven and Désirée. In their own language, no congruity lies between the terms thus opposed: in language more suitable to these pages, to mistrust *her* love could not augment my faith in celestial mercy. There is something eminently pathetic, I think, in this zeal of poor human nature to deduce a lesson and a reward at all hazards from all events, in this blind unrecognized resolute optimism:—but if offered as serious arguments, a sad smile is all that grief can gain from or give them.

Away! we know that tears are vain,  
 That death nor heeds nor hears distress:  
 Will this unteach us to complain?  
 Or make one mourner weep the less?  
 And thou—who tell’st me to forget,  
 Thy looks are wan, thine eyes are wet.

What reasons remained? what more ‘consolatories writ’ or spoken? If ten thousand more, Désirée would be at last no less fondly dear, no less endlessly regretted. ‘We know not any thing’: away with these hollow fallacies, I said in my despair. To accept them was to betray myself, to change substantive grief, Nature’s work, for Man’s unreal consolations, for the unattainable river of life to substitute the mirage waters of the desert. And, however heart-shaken and darkened, this sad prerogative of reason I still retained, that I could not voluntarily blind myself with

delusive doctrine, lie to Heaven by confessing that love for Désirée had lessened or eclipsed higher aspirations, or in that too frequent transaction with conscience which supports the pride of system beneath the disguise of humility, create some fancied demerit to justify and to account for a chastisement, real alas ! in its severity, no less than in its cause unfathomable.

XXVI It was, the conviction could not be repressed, a loss which in the deepest sense I must acknowledge the ruin of life. But with what strength was possible, I must go forth, (and, arguing thus with myself and withdrawn into the darkness of thought, I looked up and saw with wonder that strange wild landscape, as if Dawn had instantaneously descended in all her plenitude, spread before me in opalescent distinctness)—go forth and bear it manfully. Whether to call the mind's attitude patience, whether resignation, whether idiotic and exhausted despair I knew not, and it concerned me little ; whence the blow had fallen, I would enquire no more, or wage a fruitless contest with the unseen Power, that Nature, (to use the least presumptuous language), whose dealings with her creatures raise our eternal questionings, and baffle them. She also, like some mortal parent, may own to favourite children ; but she compensates, it would appear, elsewhere for that partiality. Indifferent to reproach or to gratitude, what she seems to require from Man is summed up in one narrow word—Acquiescence. To this, every system, when cleared of the tints in which it clothes the world by the crystal lens of truth, Stoic or Epicurean, free or fatalist, Sceptical or Christian, gild it with epithets as we choose, is resolved at last :—Acquiescence. ' The drift of the Maker is dark ',

events take their course ; evil deepens upon evil, or experience may work a cure, and Time enforce consolation. Man must yield : All at last is Acquiescence.

But however these things might be, fully if not gladly I would accept them henceforth as mysteries ; matters whose cause was concealed, and their issue beyond foresight. I would go forth hoping nothing, fearing nothing, asking nothing. Submissive without the mockery of pretended resignation to that exquisite anguish, my own Désirée another's—I would take up at least, and if so it might be, bear through the set ways of common life, the mysterious burden of patience without fruit, and the pangs of remorse without guiltiness. And *she* . . . . O, at thought of Désirée, there was no space left for prayer or oath, for regret or renunciation, vows to love her still, or to forget her—It could not be otherwise ; *aeterno devictus vulnere* : here was my Fate before me. *Vivi adunque*, I cried in the words of the passionate Fiammetta : *nullo ti puo di questo privare*. Years have passed since, and it has been so.

XXVII But meanwhile morning had fully come ; I could say already, yesterday I was ignorant of the worst ; yesterday I could hope yet. . . . The rising sun shot prismatic rays, keen arrows, over the serrated Eastern summits ; a few hours, and I must be in the world again, within the great city which held Désirée and her fortunes. I looked around, and saw the loftiest peaks and loose rocks scattered against the sky-line accented in the white radiance of dawn into steely clearness : above, the ' boat of Seléné ', as Heracleitus named her, like a white keel filled with blue transparent aether, sailing into inscrutable space. I climbed



onwards and beyond the voice of the torrent : a great calm was spread on the higher rocks ; a silence as if the Day were collecting its strength for coming conflict. Then a long rampart of distant summits rose into sight, so exquisitely delicate in pearly grey that the white vapour moving in scattered clouds above their serration by contrast appeared earthly and material, whilst the pure sky itself beyond seemed to soften its own hues in reverent and loving rivalry to match the mountain tenderness.

O ! swerving for a moment from the fixed decision not to shrink from the conflict of life or fail before unmanly sorrow, that I were free of these solitudes—that I might live still in society of that one Power which cannot ‘ betray ‘ the heart that loves her ’—that I might breathe henceforward this luminous and aethereal air, this ‘ crystal ‘ silence ’, pure of the thick stormy fermentation which frets the atmosphere of man, stirred always by the uproar of action, the shouts of pretentious pleasure, the murmurs of hatred, the ceaseless sighs of the oppressed and the afflicted ! Here Nature might bless me also, as she blessed her devoted Wordsworth, with lofty thoughts, with impressions of quietness and beauty ; here, if from a Fate beyond even her control, unable to lead me ‘ from joy to joy ’, she might be privileged at least to satisfy the ‘ longing for confirmed ‘ tranquillity.’ . . . A dark point appeared whilst I thought thus, far within the valley below ; in a moment it was an eagle ; He swept above my head, questing for booty ; but at the sight of man, curved away into the invisible chambers of the highest heaven with a loud and ominous cry. The mountain echoes took up the hard iron yelp with seven separate repetitions. Then ‘ all things returned into

‘ absolute calm, as if sound itself had ceased to be ’ ; as if the world had passed into miraculous and universal silence. I felt ashamed when the noise of my own footsteps, carrying me back towards the storm and struggle of life, broke in upon a repose so profound and so pathetic.

## THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

## BOOK IV.

I So I returned to the great city, anxious indeed to avoid any tidings of Désirée, yet ever and again compelled to a sad smile of self-derision, as I found myself endeavouring to gain opportunities of at least hearing her name spoken. But in that endeavour, by mere chance, by the vast number of separate currents of intelligence in London, by the half-conscious forbearance of friends, (I know not which was the cause), I was long unsuccessful. And presently he who imagined that Fate, during the seven years, (for over so long a period has the narrative borne me), had tried him with her worst wormwood, learned now that fresh forms of pain, spectres of more distracting terror, severer tests of endurance, awaited him in this life-long descent through the circles of sadness. Fearful as are, in so many ways, the powers of that mighty engine, I know no trial more terror-striking than this result of vital sorrow, (already noticed) that the balance of the mind appears to fluctuate beneath its continued agency. I do not speak here of the fever and distraction attendant on a first sense of catastrophe ;—such effects are in their own nature transient ;—but there is a certain crisis in which, whilst the sad sobriety of reason

remains unimpaired, passion, prolonged against circumstance, and at war with Fate, almost passes into disease, and changeful Nature revenges herself on Fidelity. As colours grow confused to an overstrained eye, so by constancy of desire, too long and too longing, we lose the moral discernment between fact and fancy ;—until things the most sadly certain become incredible to ‘ an esperance so obstinately ‘ strong ’ that it has become part of the discerning faculty itself, inwoven into the texture of our reason. That I should, for so I supposed it must be, see *Désirée* no more : that those accents, the familiar music of life from childhood, would never be heard by me again : that the ‘ so long ‘ desired hand ’ had clasped another’s :—whilst believing, I could scarcely comprehend it. As with Death and Hell, I might use the words ; but the shock with which they closed in upon the mind seemed to deaden it to the reception of their terrible significance. I refused the society of friends at first ; but it was to discover that solitude was thronged with importunate phantoms and the face I should never see again. To shun her sight, and perpetually seek it : to think only of her, yet not bear to think of her : to dread the wakefulness of the night, because haunted by the image of *Désirée*, the distraction of the day, because this effaced it by fruitless and unconsoling activity : to find that whilst retaining unimpaired the intellectual capacity to enter into imaginative thought and science, philosophy brought no diversion, and Wordsworth no relief,—a discovery which seemed to destroy the last possibility of bearing the weight of the mortal hours :—such were amongst the paradoxes of pain, the choice favours and lessons of adversity.

II These experiences were from within. But returning

gradually to the common ways of life, from the routine of business, from the routine of pleasure, from intercourse with strangers and with friends, new perplexities arose in armed hostility around me. During the years previously narrated, a secret joy in Désirée's presence, a secret confidence in final mercy, had, I now became aware, sustained me : a something further from happiness than from hope. God himself, I thought, could not now restore even that partial blessing, or give me hope or trust again. But having accepted, (whether for the best, indeed, I know not), the part of resolution, of resistance against the enervation of grief, of healthy labour, and with it, social life,—at once I fell beneath an accompanying duty of deception,—no more euphonious name would be true,—which I may justly hold one of the heaviest amongst the many unrecompensed evils of sorrow. Little, very little can the moralizing advisers, who in circumstances such as these lend with a smile the counsels of practical activity, measure the results of obedience ;—the tyrannous chain of custom, which follows at once the return to common life, when the Spirit, walking meanwhile alone, like that lost one of the parable, through the ' leafless desert of the mind ', is compelled to affect unreal interest, to act an impossible and hypocritical cheerfulness, to play a false nature. There is no escape from this : that ' common gloss of theologians ' is idle : we *cannot* be in the world, and not of the world. Thus I was now constrained to silence on the one thought perpetually recurring ; to many words, when the heart had no desire but for silence. Not the world only, but friends, the dearest and of the most sympathetic intention, ignorant by a more merciful Fate what the wide devastation of such calamity may be, were

imperative in these requirements. Nothing else will satisfy in fact that lightheartedness, which under the current epithets rational, religious, or healthy, is the prevailing tone of an age, generally speaking deficient in manly grasp, and eager to suppress the sternness of truth by gracious sophistry. It is a bitter truth, whatever its professions, the world scorns defeat and sorrow. And whilst in the world we must obey. To take a tone different from its dictates would be the merest folly. Thus how often I entered some house prepared to wear the colours of gaiety, when the very lights and music reproached me ; when, in the language of Caesar's soldiery going out to death, I could have greeted any friend with the *moriturus te salutat* ! Bitter was it to set the memory to jests, and arrange the lips for laughter ; bitter to sit amongst the smilers, and raise the smile in turn ; to pretend to plan the future ; to say ' Yes ! ' that will be, of course, when I marry ' , or to acquiesce in the parting intercongratulation, ' this has been a happy ' evening ' . But bitterer yet was it to remember during the solitude of the night, that perhaps I had acted my part well, that I had lied with success against feelings too true for utterance, that, becoming what I seemed, for a few moments I had been ' blind to my soul's most grievous loss ' , had fallen beneath the fallacies of hope, had exposed myself to the irony of the revenging Furies. . . . Then, when similar circumstances were repeated, I had too often to regret an indulgence in jesting without shame, and sarcasm without mercy :—and (although the last word was assuredly inapplicable) the remark of a great and honoured writer reproached me for the vanity of these attempts to re-enter life ; for ' the desperate levity and bitterness of conversation

‘ into which I had lapsed ; for the false impression conveyed  
 ‘ to companions, who were unable to conceive the strength  
 ‘ of those emotions which are concealed by the jests of the  
 ‘ wretched, and by the follies of the wise ’.

III Now, further, although moved perhaps by other reasons, I might partially agree with the gloomy teacher in his proclamation that life in these latter ages had passed into falsehood, an unmanly deception, a ‘ gibbering of ‘ apes by the Dead Sea ’. Here, at least, as in the world within, I was met by perplexity. Surely something is amiss in the essence of that society, which (passing over in this place here the base pursuit of wealth or position, with graver aspects) seems to treat life as a state alternating between toil, operative only to provide means for mere existence, or puerile and fragmentary pleasures. Of the many miracles comprised in the ‘ world’s way ’, none seems so wonderful as its thoughtlessness. What facile acquiescence in trivialities and delusions ! what want of manly method and height of aim ! what indifference, in a word, to life ! How contrasted is this morbid languor of the age, characteristically satirized and inculcated at once by our great Novelist, with the force and purpose of ancient, even of mediaeval, times ! Assuredly no one can fall into the madness of regretting that earlier systems cannot be restored ; that honest-hearted men can believe no longer in Pope or Pagan : yet we should be permitted to admire the simple earnestness with which men in Arabia and Ionia, Rome and Athens, accepted life without compromise : prizing the present not, as modern moralists affirm in complacent falsehood, because they were without hope for the future, but simply for this, that it *was* the present—the

actual scene of pleasure, pain, and duty. Nothing, however, can be more opposed, perhaps even more unintelligible, to the critical and indeterminate tone of thought now dominant than that limited but consistent perfection, that practical sanity which above all things mark the schemes of ancient Ethic. By result no doubt of its transitional position, this age, like the weak-hearted Look-both-ways of the allegory, whilst assuming Earnestness as its watchword, halts between sincere acceptance of the Human or the Divine, Positivism or Spiritualism—alike sceptical without strength, and credulous without confidence.

IV In the false calm of despair, such considerations pressed on me with augmented force. Everywhere I saw the thoughtless and the good blinded alike by wilfulness to the travail of creation, the world's wrong, the vast preponderating Evil which the creed on their lips asserted was man's inalienable burden : for personal justification denying these things altogether, or compromising for a moment's confession by immediate recourse to some consolatory sophist saying, enthroning as Faith what is facility of forgetfulness. ' Si vous ne vous souciez guère de savoir la 'vérité,' observes one whose words I am glad to substitute for mine, after noticing the superficial philosophy of life accepted by his contemporaries, ' en voilà assez pour vous 'laisser en repos. Mais si vous désirez de tout votre 'cœur de la connaître, ce n'est pas assez, regardez au détail ; 'c'en cerait assez pour une question de philosophie ; mais 'ici où il va de tout. . . . Et cependant, après une ré-'flexion légère de cette sorte, on s'amusera, etc.' . . . Through natural, perhaps faulty, frame of mind it was, not through any morbid distraction of sorrow, that I found



it impossible to lay aside the pressure of conviction thus lightly. The philosopher can write, We will survey mankind and the globe they inhabit with serenity, as he sets forth the scheme of his Kosmos : but no question, if we consider it truly, is so terrible and so imperative, when it has once arisen, as that, How the world came to be this astonishing scene of conflict, this battle-field of the demons and the angels ? Such considerations, I may add, are neither wise or unwise, idle or necessary ; the innate bias of some minds, and mine, I suppose, was such, renders them simply inevitable. They who would account for by calling them ' morbid ', may be reminded that epithets are not reasons : they who fancy there is pride or pleasure in recording, have never felt them. In this form the ' riddle of existence ' tormented me now often in solitary hours, when I *dared* no longer think on Désirée, with a force the more fearful because these thoughts were caused or attended by a great calm of mind, a sad lucidity. It was to the maniac of the prison island between Zuecca and Lido that Shelley ascribed the awful fate to be

as a nerve o'er which do creep  
The else-unfelt oppressions of the earth :

but there were spaces of set sobriety during which I shared it by reflection on the records of history, or the reported news of the day, on what I had myself seen, and on what I had *not* seen.

V Here, too, I am aware, human invention is ready with appropriate anodynes : the saint and the worldly, Goethe and Arnold, will say, ' man is not sent to solve the problem, ' but to act it. Turn to practical activity : dig, colonize,

'explore the innocent wonders of nature : heal the wrongs  
 'you vainly lament : thought is morbid, theory is gray ;  
 'let each better what he can, and leave the rest. . . .' If  
 to follow such advice, and proclaim it a real solution be the  
 single course for which these teachers reserve praise or  
 toleration, the writer can but anticipate their verdict. Yet,  
 whilst he would not, of course, assert that his practice  
 equalled their requirements, he holds it unphilosophical,  
 say rather an old old sophism, to rest the virtue of a medicine  
 on the universality of its effects : to affirm where it has not  
 cured, that it has not been taken. He has honestly tried  
 these methods : they are high duties, but their reward is in  
 themselves ; they divert our thoughts, but do not answer ;  
 like many spiritual remedies more, they bring much excel-  
 lent distraction : what they cannot bring is Peace. Thus  
 their failure wastwofold. Besidethepursuitsalreadynoticed,  
 the earnest wish to render myself not more unworthy  
 Désirée by submission to weak and selfish sorrow urged me  
 to efforts, not without fruit occasionally, to relieve some  
 victims of injustice or misfortune, to place some in the  
 ways of honourable success : useful duties, fulfilled without  
 relief, and recorded without pleasure. But that any man,  
 though wise beyond Plato or happy beyond Cleobis, should  
 imagine such activity can seriously lessen personal pain, or  
 give any solution of the general mystery, was to me astonish-  
 ing. For the former, it is enough to say, could the most  
 entire self-approval of conscience, could the life of the  
 holiest Saint, of the most widely useful hero, if I had lived it,  
 render Désirée loved less fondly, lost less utterly ? Could  
 these things still Rachel weeping for her children ? Nothing  
 but love ransoms or recompenses love.

That fallacy is in truth answered by stating it. But the second supposed result of action, although the answer is implicitly the same, requires a few words additional. It is indeed well that if any man be led by despair at the thought of the world's mysterious evil into vague inaction or Utopian theory, the distractions of personal duty should be prescribed as remedial. Yet as it is simply false to argue that such thought is in itself 'unpractical', so it is disingenuous to teach that any true solution lies in the *voie de fait*. As, in the strict sphere of reasoning, the loudest proclamation that it is 'God's world', the fiercest or the most winning appeals to 'Faith', form no *Theodicaea*, nor reply to the enquiry why, then, these things are so : thus, to those oppressed by the 'burden of the mystery', there is no practical relief to learn, even from one of the world's greatest Thinkers, that 'man is not made for thought, but for action', that if all men followed the right, evil would cease to be. That IF is fatal. We ask the oracle to solve a fundamental and conscience-disquieting perplexity : we are told if the perplexity did not exist, it would not exist. This, and no further, answer is conveyed by the current doctrines alluded to, whether taught by poet or by novelist, preacher or philosopher. That men rarely care to think on what too nearly concerns them, that such thought is full of pain (and there is none so unpopular as the pain of thinking), are the true reasons why an unmerited success attends these efforts to evade perplexity, and stifle enquiring : to hush the confession of an ignorance, fatal to the pride of systems : why by the din and stir of (let me suppose) personal right action, we are so content to drown the voice of mystery, the sad oracles of earth, the groans of creation. Seldom, seldom

indeed on these matters is the plain voice of conscience now suffered a hearing. There are other *Indices* than that of Rome, and Inquisitions not less repressive to right liberty than Dominic's.

VI But not so, not so can the obstinate questionings of nature be silenced. Like children who will not hear when one speaks to them of a mother's danger, or answer serious counsel at some moment of danger with song or toys, men bring each the work of his own hands, a model church, perhaps, or penitentiary, or mission, or healthy cottage, or well-rhymed aspiration for the 'larger hope', hymns of thankful happiness, and treatises of teleological perfection,—but the Sphinx puts her riddle still. . . . O, as the passionate Pascal cried in his despair, *qu'elle dit tout ou rien !* There have been happy men, the wisest of kings, and the greatest poets were among them : if not these, whom should we name happy ? who felt the absolute nothingness of every solution of the universe which the universe has afforded us : who, oppressed inly and travailing under conviction of the unutterable labour and wrong which filled all things, asked 'what was yet in this That bears the name of Life', to answer with 'vanity of vanities'. But even more, perhaps, would one justly suffer beneath the darkness of the Maker's drift, the 'Isis hid by the veil', more be moved to bitterness by these many rash failures to lift it, to scorn by 'the crowd's 'narrow devices to blunt care', who suffered himself beneath mysterious and irremediable calamity : to whom

ζωῆς ἀβίου μέρος ἀθρήσαντι

the gloom of the world within the heart seemed correlative to what he saw in the world without, the conflict of Eros

and Anteros another phase of the war between Ormuzd and Ahriman ; the loss of Désirée, a reflection of that characteristic of these latter days, which we can hardly describe as less than the obscuration or withdrawal of Providence. To this cause at least, if any blame such dark thoughts, I appeal for mitigation of censure. For every feeling of real depth appears to run into the Infinite : to mirror itself not only in ' rocks and trees ', but in the universal frame of things : to cast shadowy projections on the Unseen, and receive its own voice back in reverberations from the halls of Heaven. It seemed to me as if love too strong and too enduring, through some mysterious relation of cause, or caprice of Destiny, fell beneath the curse which of old had visited knowledge too obstinately curious, as if the exile from Eden were renewed in rejection by Désirée.

VII In pages dedicated to human passion, dear —, are such considerations too serious ? I think not. Far from all souls impressed with the duty of thoughtfulness be that false philosophy which coarsely charts out human acts and experiences into trivial and important, transient and eternal, heavenly and earthly ; materializing nine-tenths of life, and phantomatically idealizing the remainder. There is a famous phrase in Goethe's ' Meister ', where the hero, anxious to escape from home duties to some sphere of Utopian independence, to gain a new soul by emigration to a new continent, is warned to renounce such wandering with ' Here or nowhere is America '. With more truth I might apply the words to the unseen world. What we half personify as Providence, what we dimly divine as Heaven, is here also or nowhere. Long ago men placed Olympus or Paradise near earth, on Mount Ida, above

Mount Salem, just beyond the blue, within the sun by a bold act of mythological imagination. As the laws of the material world, the conditions of space, unveiled themselves, the Heavens appeared to undergo an immeasurable recession : that country must lie now, men thought, beyond the farthest distinguishable star, beyond the Milky Way, beyond the nebula in Orion. In a less physical form, this mode of belief prevails yet only too widely ; and men professing systems the most apparently opposed, Catholicism and Comtism, for more reasons than I can here enumerate, separate so widely what is and what is not of earth, that they lose right lordship over either : they divide till they can no longer govern. Yet at last, I think, the primitive faith returns, purified by long rejection, and men now confess at least that the Unseen is very near us, is the other side of all we see or handle, is the hidden substratum of our own thoughts, the soul's soul. Partly on account of the reasons now suggested, partly because they illustrate what elsewhere I have named the sense of the Fundamental Antitheses of Philosophy, partly because the reaction from such thoughts to the contrasting image of the peace—and that, too, now forfeited—surrounding Désirée held a conspicuous place in the annals of affection, I have included in this book reflections which, if not alien from its scope, are at least hazardous in their own nature. But it appears to the writer the braver, he trusts even the more truly humble, course, to risk something. Better the sighs or the smiles of friends, that one really formidable verdict, than a silence of cowardice on matters so vital to life that he does not see how life can well be regulated without some consideration upon them.

VIII Turning, however, from thoughts which we are apt to approach with diffidence and leave with dogmatism,—if Passion, as I have said, partook of Infinity, the commonplaces of life, once glorified by a consecration so irradiating that even ‘to sweep a room’ with the thought of *Désirée* would, as old Herbert has it, have been something ‘divine’,—naturally now pressed on me at times with a sense of inevitable littleness, a weight ‘heavy as ‘frost’: at times with a sad and almost solemn majesty. Everywhere in what I did or saw or traversed the inseparable image met me; here we had walked together, this occupation I had entered on that the fruits might be hers, that was a friend whose acquaintance had been sought or valued because he had spoken justly of *Désirée*, or was honoured by her praises. I could turn to nothing, but she was there also. The poets have told us of a region seven times surrounded by *Lethe*: but where on earth is the spot fenced and secure against the Furies of Remembrance? This intimacy went back almost to the ‘days ‘disowned by memory’, and there were few within recollection not associated with *Désirée*. In the life of love, every day indeed is an anniversary. Yet how far off all this seemed now, how far off! . . . . When restraining or endeavouring to restrain the mind’s desolate errantry through these ruins of recollection and the Paradise which there was no regaining, I asked aid from books, here again, as already noticed, I was face to face with the curse. Nothing can be more dreadful, I think, than to wake as thus to heart-sinking fear at the prospect of another day to bear: to feel the necessity of enquiring where to find relief from the ‘weight of these mortal hours’, to take

up the books which once gave delight so pure, or to visit the scenes formerly so inspiring, and recognize that their glory has passed ; that at best they can be but pastimes now to cozen the moments.—So with society. Though I did not love them less, I became reluctant, after many vain experiments, to see friends whom I could no longer meet with any words of gaiety, with any hope of comfort. Children's faces, once a sight so dear and delightful, smote me now with pain and the remembrance of the saddest of Lamb's sad reveries : when I saw these happy creatures, that vision so common, yet so divine, of bright features, eyes undimmed, and smiles of love for love, during summer time keeping holy holiday in park or field,—I would willingly have hid myself within some dark room, ' where the ghosts would visit me, and the so long Beloved ' come as if from the grave and sit by me and weep ' till I also should not be ashamed of such weakness.

Falling thus by degrees into solitude, there were few days when I did not go through the streets of the great City, and think that I saw Désirée amongst the crowd ; few unknown female forms whom as they approached, I did not fancy by some wonder worked by celestial pity on my behalf, by some miracle of love and longing, I should find converted into one, from whom this absence, whatever meanwhile might have been her fate, became at last the one thing most insupportable. Whether another's or not, I thought I hardly cared ; I must be with Désirée again. Here was no self-deception ; no animating hope of brighter days ' sure to dawn ', so often idly promised by friends more anxious to comfort than conversant with despair ; no pleadings left which could now reverse the sentence of



Anteros ; it was only that the soul might be cheated a moment of this dreariness ; that the wound might not always bleed thus inwardly : only that I might see her once more. . . . I began to dwell on this thought. If so, I should prefer, it seemed, that she should *not* meet me, by any accident doing a graceful or generous action. Alien as such feeling is from the false lesson taught by romances, others no doubt have shared it. It might have contented us that affection at the first should have been born of chance and some fortunate moment ; that she should have seen us act worthily of manhood, and have loved. But now we would hardly owe the love ourselves have failed of winning to the most felicitous of accidents : to the most wonderful of coincidences. We would not be valued for any courage, brilliancy, or grace of mind ; we would not be rewarded for constancy, or prized at last through pity transformed. I could be satisfied, I thought, were such triumph possible, with no love but for my own ownest sake : and Heaven, which now could not give, could not satisfy me without it.

IX One day, as these imaginations accompanied and isolated me as if in Saharan solitude through a vast and crowded street, something casually drew my eyes to a passing carriage ;—a sudden awaking, a strange sympathy, made me aware that the moment's glance was met and answered. Readers, should any reader have tracked thus far my sad story, will not expect here any development of the plot by stirring action, by a master-stroke of ideal ingenuity, by one of those luminous coincidences which in romances, however tragic, so often save a hero from despair, and the moral of a tale from self-refutation. Mine is but one instance and lesson more of the Preacher's

long-recorded experience : the inner history of things ' that ' have been, and may be again ' : of a catastrophe which those who have experienced it, find unrelieved by the tints of the Romantic. Returning to the narrative : I raised my eyes slowly, as if under real fascination : it was for one instant, and one instant later all would have been lost :— why is Désirée's look towards me so glowing, so full of repressed appeal ?

Then the mind reels with a thousand foolish fancies, a thousand insane devices, a thousand unheard prayers. It was one of the rare conjunctures when all the microcosm of this mysterious personality sympathizes together : shaken and trembling in heart and limb, in the midst of the crowded highway, the careless crowd, the glare and din of life, I wandered almost from the control of reason.

—Alas for the conviction such a moment brings, that time and fate have not left the dear face less endeared ! Alas for the glance that should be Heaven's own consolation, and that makes us only more forlorn !—The desire had been accomplished : and I must even regret that I had seen Désirée again. This should be the very last such moment : I would leave England at once on a long planned journey through Southern France ; I would try, in final resort, what Nature—But that trial was to be preceded by phases of feeling at the moment little anticipated.

X For a few days later, passing the house one April morning, whilst a fitful hazy sunbeam struck through the ' vapour-braided blue ', I was surprized and detained a moment by a little crowd which barred the pavement. Carriages stood by, and wedding signs : again, whilst I vainly tried to grasp courage from submission, I trembled

with inner faintness ; I thought, It is well ; I know the worst ; I tried to ask blessings on Désirée. Then I heard her voice call me by my Christian name ; it was as if Heaven were kind, the supplication of years answered at last : I looked up, and saw Désirée herself at the open door, sunnier than the sun in bright bridesmaid's dress and the glow of golden hair, *l'étoile au front*, and smiles of happy welcome. ' Why have you not come before ?— ' why have you been so long away ? '—these were questions which my silence answered. ' It is Mary's wedding, ' put off from last summer : come in, we thought you ' knew the day ; come in, she will be so glad to see you : ' or go to the church first, you can give her your good ' wishes when we return '. She smiled again, and with one blithe glance ran in to aid her sister's final preparations.

Now, like the blind outcast of Gospel story, restored suddenly to full sight, and that the sight of Heaven, I, thankful beyond words, and in one moment rightly comprehending the error of the last months, through crowded streets hastened to the Church, as if the hour were mine. I looked up, expecting to discover in the skies some signal of success displayed—some glory-cross beneath which, with Constantine in the legend, I might go on to victory. If the heavens gave no visible token, had not God, in Désirée's own eyes, inscribed a more celestial augury ? Humble with excess of hope, my heart leapt at that recollection. I went as a conqueror through the Church-gate wreathed with fir-boughs and laurel into an arch of triumph. And then—

come quei, che con lena affannata  
Uscito fuor del pelago alla riva  
Si volge all' acqua perigliosa, e guata—

—whilst soft music eddied round aisle and choir, and friends pressed in with subdued voices of interwelcoming, I sat still, blessing the pause in which I could survey the hopeless past, and frame a future accordant with what, let Experience counsel her calmest, in that miraculous revulsion of feeling I could not but believe were the sure promises and long-deferred but at last hundred-fold descending and accomplished mercies of Heaven. The ‘sovereignty of sweetness’, Dante’s youthful phrase, is not more than adequate to express emotions which I have no words to describe in their fulness. . . . So the minutes went by.

—Sed moraris, abit dies :  
prodeas, nova nupta.

Now came louder notes, shaking the walls like the pulse of an overcharged heart ; a whisper and stirring in the multitude ;—the Bride and the white array of home-friends and sisters, veiled all and wreathed with rose alike. How slight outward signs an event so momentous in family life marks on the faces most nearly interested ! low words, and hands a little trembling, and pale lips, and higher colour, and the smiles, nature’s last effort to guard composure and to suppress tears. . . . All these I watched : —And then, amidst the festive spectacle, to me affecting far beyond even national pageantries, amidst the strangely blending effect of hazy air and fitful sunbeams, crimsoned in their passage through the blazoned saints, sacred words and choral responses, the silent crowd and garlanded white group which to fancy seemed a company of the Glorified from the Paradise Adoration-scenes of Van Eyck or Angelico, —in the midst of what to me appeared indeed a recovered

Paradise,—by some caprice of contrast came a remembrance of that fearful Vision, which, beginning with a music not unlike to-day's, closed at last with 'female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to me, and but a moment allowed,—and clasped hands, and heart-breaking partings, and then—everlasting farewells.' . . . O not so, not so ! I would not suffer these thoughts ; the God who made us, and who foresees our tears, could not have restored the heart's desire to take her from me, to point and emphasize an irony so cruel, that to think it possible at that moment seemed an insult to the skies ;—I would not suffer these thoughts ; I would seize the Angel-hope given with both hands, and bind her with the chains of love, and faith, and thankfulness ;—I would take her hand for my guidance through what, with Désirée, would be the double blessedness of an earthly and a celestial for ever,—the Heaven of life, and the life of Heaven.

XI But meanwhile the repeated pledges are given ; the solemn blessings and awful names have consecrated the promise ; the great Patriarchal examples have been appealed to for the fulfilment. This truly, though associations from romance and from reality concur often to conceal it, is the most poetical of our English Church Services ; there is something of Milton and Michelangelo in that union of grandeur and of homeliness ; in the repetition of the familiar Christian names, the donation of 'worldly goods', followed at once by the primæval pictures of the 'comfort of Abraham and Sarah', the 'faithfulness of Isaac and Rebekah'. This young maiden, whose marriage-day called forth those ancient idyllic images, was the bright child I had held on my knees at the Tesoretto below La

Collina, who, in years so far back that I hardly wished to number them, had loved me for loving Désirée. I reminded her of that morning, when, after a few moments' hurry and dispersion, we met again within the house which I seemed to enter after years of exile. It was, indeed, a meeting confused and broken ; many words, and little said ; and every one tried to give the dear fluttered creature joy, and put the wishes for a life into a minute's farewell. But she found kindly patience to acknowledge the recollection, and to add that Désirée more than once had expressed wonder at my absence, and regrets that I was not here to share this approaching pleasure. We were all now, I found, to disperse ; for I before long must take an expedition on business to France, and they at once were to start for some sea-side residence. But before parting, I had of course, promised on my return to revisit them. ' We have much to ' talk over ', Désirée said ; and I was too happy to answer her ' we ' with many words, or do more, as I looked farewell, than earnestly repeat the burden of Tennyson's lines in silence :—

But that God bless thee, dear—who wrought  
Two spirits to one equal mind—  
With blessings beyond hope or thought,  
With blessings which no words can find.

These are beautiful lines ; but they express rather the satiated peace than the pomp of triumphant passion. There is a trivial song with the recurrent phrase ' She is ' mine ', which I had heard years before and laughed at. I thought the words now of a more exalted and dearer import than the Master's consummate poetry.

XII What was it, so soon as reflection was possible, in

London I had leisure at least to think, on which the heart had founded this palace of happiness so exquisite that it appeared rather like something fashioned in a dream than the most real of earth's realities? Had I any authentic sign that Heaven had truly given me the crown of life? that she who had promised to love me always faithfully as a sister, sought more now than to satisfy her passion for sincerity? that absence had proved my better friend—pity taught Désirée the secrets of affection? Such questions—but I did not frame them *then*: faith in the force of love superseded every cold inquiry. Nature was kind, and Providence was powerful; I may truly say I put myself in their arms like a child in his mother's, careless where she may carry him in his sleep, but secure of her smiles at the waking. 'Whence and Whither', questions which, on so many subjects, provoke and defeat human reasoning, I would not allow the soul to ask; I would take the new life and enjoy it to the fullest. This temper of mind might be folly; if so, it is however one not unknown to those

who, after long  
And weary expectation, have been blest  
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.

O! it was enough to be loved to-day;—*past* and *future*, *anticipation* and *remembrance*, I thought, were words that should be blotted from the dictionary. . . . Who was author of the superficial reflection, that man never is happy in the present, but lives only by memory or by hope? I at least at this season experienced many hours which refuted that thankless doctrine; many during which—and that even in her absence—I could have cried to Fate: Stop here; it is enough. For, passing to a most natural, a final

phase in passion, I loved Désirée now with the whole strength of manhood : in the prospect of the bliss and settled comfort, the ' eternal sweetness to be grasped in the ' hand so long desired ' (if I may thus paraphrase two lines in which Petrarch has concentrated his most aethereal tenderness)—I found all that the reason could most severely require, and all the heart most fondly ask ; all that would ensure peace, and reward activity.

Now, again, the trivial round and common tasks of life seemed to reacquire meaning and beauty : aimless no longer, or fulfilled and completed in their fulfilment alone, they recovered that august importance which, in the simple heroic ages (and in these pre-eminently), attached to everything by which Home was sustained or fortified.

One little spot of ground in mercy lent,  
One hour of home before the grave :—

reading (for reading once more was possible), Iliad and Odyssey afresh at this time, I may confess that my intense conviction of the blessings which a holy-hearted Poet of our own days had thus summed up, received a romantic corroboration from that ancient voice of Ionian minstrelsy which we personify under the name Homer. The delight of boyhood from the din of his combats and the more than mediaeval chivalry of his tone,—what I now felt most in Homer's poems was the love of fireside-nooks and sunny-calm orchards, Andromache at the loom, and Nausicaa by the fountain,—in a word, the deep domesticity which underlies the force and fire of that immortal narrative. I wondered eulogists and commentators had failed to find the source of his unfading interest through so many centuries in that household tenderness, that religion of the



hearth which he brings before us as the animating genius of 'heroes arming for battle',—for which Achilles withdrew himself from glory, and Hector went out to death.

XIII 'Finally, not even in reading', said Augustine of his agony at an early friend's death, as if intending by that phrase to exhaust his ultimate and surest consolation, 'could I find any peace'. Having traversed the same sad experience, I now, the chapter preceding has shown, during these three months of recovered Paradise, regained a delight from books which the contrast rendered even more delightful. *That* had indeed been a largess of pleasure from an Emperor of the ancient world: but in pages where everything is in one sense egotistic, I do not, I trust, run too deeply into egotism by recording my thankfulness for the happy hours due at this time to one of our own Poets. Even to readers more versed in language, the real masterworks are not numerous: it is wise to read them slowly and with temperance:—I at least had ample reason for satisfaction now, that amongst those long before consciously reserved for later study (and this at so bright a moment), were the writings of that young Englishman, the stable-keeper's son, the surgeon's apprentice, in whom after three thousand years the spirit of Homer revived with a glory which, in Milton's majestic phrase, had Fate allotted longer life to Keats, might have been truly *collateral*. But the Gods, who 'snowed a hundred winters' on the Ionian master, favoured Adonais with 'great genius 'and early death':

And he is gathered to the kings of thought  
Who waged contention with their times' decay,  
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

It gave me a real joy to think, that by deep and delighted reverence for the treasures of creative power and melody in the glorious imperfection of 'Endymion', or the almost ideal excellence of the 'Ode to the Nightingale' and 'Lamia', I in some faint degree might seem to 'fulfil the 'renown' of Keats by sympathy for his genius. As I read the 'Eve of St. Agnes', like Porphyro it was with faintness at the affluence of beauty : at the astonishing warmth and delicacy, homeliness and height, with which the passion of wedded love is there exalted to a loveliness surpassed only, in my judgment, by the more than poet who created Agatha and Euryanthe. . . . The writer has already quoted much in these pages ; readers partial enough to prefer his to better words may think too much : yet I confidently look for something beyond pardon from those to whom the passage may be unknown, if I transcribe the verses in which Keats has painted Madeline lying down in her beauty.

—Her vespers done,

Of all its wreathéd pearls her hair she frees ;

Unclasps her warméd jewels one by one ;

Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees

Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :

Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,

Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees

In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,

But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,

In sort of wakeful swoon perplex'd she lay,

Until the poppiéd warmth of sleep oppress'd

Her soothéd limbs and soul fatigued away ;

Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day :

Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;

Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;

Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,

As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XIV Delightedly too I returned now to converse with friends ; delightedly, both from renascent ability to enjoy without reserve their words and affection, and from the sense that, freed from the importunate and unhealthy weight of sorrow, I could meet them henceforth with honest pleasure, sincerely sharing the gaiety I had so often acted. No doubt in the circumstances of my story there is nothing new or exceptional ; yet certainly it is true that amongst friends, taking the word even in its widest sense, I knew of none, I knew indeed there was no one on whom a despair so deep and dreadful as mine of the years since losing Désirée had fallen. Some fair portion of happiness had been within grasp of all and had animated their life ; I seemed restored now to my natural position amongst them ; —nay, to a superiority of position which was in every other respect not in accordance with nature, by the magnitude and solemnity of my own regained inward blessedness.

Yet I should have been ashamed to fill so many previous pages narrating that sense of sadness and perplexity with which the wonder of the world (irrespective of personal feelings,) for many years had seized me, had those convictions depended by any secret or unavowed enchainment from my own individual fate : nor ashamed less, if the brightness of these days had effaced them. Infinite at once and infinitesimal, I knew that my own happy fortune, all to me, to the world was nothing : it was no test of the general course of life ; no solution of the ‘ *summa rerum* ’. To pass unrelieved, to deny the existence of wrong and suffering, because Désirée’s love, if love it was—and I hardly allowed that *if* to be hypothetical—seemed for ever

to have enfranchised me from calamity, this would have been a confirmation of the common sophism, that success causes selfishness. Rather, remembrance of the vast transition in the whole aspect of life which this single Hope had caused, ransoming me at once from despair beyond remorse to joy beyond Angels, more forcibly impressed me with the conviction, common no doubt to many to whom the natural voice of conscience is audible,—that no wisdom has yet unveiled the secret of man's fortunes ; that there are more things in heaven and earth (to take in their widest and most serious sense words far oftener quoted than believed,) than are dreamt of or explained in any philosophy ; that the mystery of sin is inadequate to solve the riddle of suffering. ' Man is not born ', the wise Goethe said, ' to read the ' enigma of Existence ; but he must attempt it, that he may ' learn the limits of knowledge '. What strikes me with always increasing force, is to find how near us are these boundaries ; how closely, as in some valley towns where rude mountain masses jostle the houses of the market-place, not merely in the sphere of speculative thought, but in the trivial relations of daily life, we are hemmed in by the Inexplicable Powers. The writer, who has of course no solution to offer, will be well satisfied if the iteration of these reflections leads any one to feel—the beginning and the end of what he would reluctantly call by a name so pretentious as his philosophy—that in this very world, the world of all of us, the most commonplace existence is a miracle of superhuman strangeness. But I have given space that few (yet those in truth the minority for whom I write,) will think insufficient, to considerations which although by their own nature theoretic and general, lie far nearer to

ordinary life and practice than most men are willing to acknowledge.

Such thoughts did not belong to the months I am now describing alone. But roused more vividly by the circumstances of that period, hence followed the pressing necessity for one who deeply felt these things, yet had not strength to change or resolve them, to find a holy consolation, a repose how full and satisfying! in the love of her he had honoured from childhood, in the thought of Désirée's peculiar health of heart, and largeness of character, contrasted with the narrow interest and sedulous littleness, the 'inhuman dearth of noble natures', which he saw, or thought he saw, around him. With her, unpardonable would be the folly, if I too fell into the world's purposeless course, if I too, fluctuating and feeble as the many, did not rise to nobler aims, animated by her courage and enheartened by her affection. That great hope glorified the glare and turmoil and dull 'week-day sky' of London; and meanwhile from without, from the South 'Spring came 'like a green echo into my heart'. Summer brought the expected letter of warm reinvitation; and then, on the business journey to Paris which I must first despatch, I had leisure again, again felt the pressing necessity, to ask without flinching on what security—the question hitherto deferred—the peace rested, which must now expect its final and absolute close or coronation.

XV But that all was won, where all was not lost, confidence in the force of love, faith that the cry of so many years could not be brought to nothing,—these were the only grounds discoverable. I loved Désirée in truth so much, that, contrasted with the dead negation of the

months preceding, even the bare possibility of hope, the license to fancy her mine, had sufficed for the triumph of a summer.

Che parlo ? o dove sono ? e chi m'inganna  
 Altri ch'io stesso e'l desiar soverchio ?

—I repeated these lines at Rouen, (my half-way station to Havre), when after vain endeavour to study the splendid monuments of that most picturesque of cities, I had ascended at last an overlooking hill, and sat with my face towards England, aiming at submission to the future whatever. Though so far dearer than life that this only made life dear, this hope too might be fallacy : Désirée's bright welcome a sister's kindness : love unreturned : the waste wilderness before me : I would put anticipation aside ; I would arm myself with patience. And yet—the hour for departure struck below on a hundred bells :—I left St. Gervais, and strode down the long Rue Beauvoisine with childish exultation. I sang aloud : I felt as if marching to a victory already mine, to a triumph beyond any that wound with crowns, and spoil, and proclamation, and the '*alalagmos* of legions', and the applause of Rome to the Capitol. Though so lately renounced, I *could* not chase from me this '*folle espérance*'. I set myself to remember past defeat : the agony of that hopelessness : yet hope came flying back each instant like a brooding bird : Every moment I found the other self saying to the real self, I am going to Désirée. If a cloud from within, a warning sensation of the possible truth overshadowed me, at once the festive feeling, the blessed knowledge, would force its way back with exultation, and lightness of heart, and the cry, I am going to Désirée.

I sat amongst 'grooms and porters' at the *Rive Droite* Station : I tried to suppress the thought by talking with them. One told me the story of his campaigning through the 'Cent Jours' ; he was simple and friendly as a man known for years ; he pressed me to taste some famous native drink close by. I found myself answering with animation : almost telling this stranger I was too happy for such pleasures. He drove away. I reasoned with myself again : I recalled the circumstances of her affectionate kindness when we had met in late years : of the thus far and no further : of forbearance more touching yet : of what I might endanger now. But in vain, but in vain was that appeal to reason. The blood would run quicker, the heart beat more airily : the soul anticipate what Heaven and she had refused to a thousand prayers. . . . The crowd, the hurry of the Gare, the shutting doors, the colporteur crying 'Journaux', the impatient guards : all these trivialities give a joy I cannot conquer, a blessedness with which I am at strife to no purpose. I see written,—

Départ pour	:	Trains to
Havre 4.10	:	Dieppe 4.25

In one day I shall be at this English 'Tesoretto' : I shall be with HER in one day. . . .

XVI Happiness, however, accordantly with the word, chances on us sometimes before we had expected her. With a sense of life and exultation naturally called forth by the Sea, at least from Englishmen, I had crossed to England under that clear arch of sunlight buttressed on the white cliffs of antagonist coasts, which so frequently, I think, spans this ocean interval.

Let no one ask me how it came to pass ;  
It seems that I am happy—

reading, a few lines together, the last gift of the great Poet—a tale published at the moment, I thought, as if by the surpassing force and delicacy of these lines and many more, to add passion to passion—the journey seemed of unexpected brevity. Railway arrangements made it my shortest route to the H— coast to take London on the way. An additional reason was, that I could at once call and ascertain from the servants of the house the latest news of their absent family. Désirée rode up as I came to the door : the first welcome to England came from her lips : the request that I would at any rate, return to-morrow, and fix the scheme for our southward journey, which could not be arranged without next morning's letters. We entered the house meanwhile. I could have kissed the walls in the plenitude of my heart's delight, and the ' beam from the ' timber ' seemed to answer me. . . . Then we sat side by side : her lately married sister, who for a few days had requested her company, was there : Désirée explained the little family circumstances which had brought her to London, and, avoiding any allusion of too soul-arousing significance, endeavoured anxiously, I saw, to give me that peculiar pleasure, resumption into the circle of ' household ' hearts ' that might be mine too, if so I would be content to have it. Who could calmly measure, and so received by the Lady of his love, the exact limits of happiness ? Why, at one moment, when she said ' You were once interested ' in ' such and such things, did the lips hesitate, and the *sorrisse parolette* grow deep and sad, and like echoes from that irrevocable *once* itself ? I answered away from the



purpose : I thought a star-crowned Angel passed over us ; a higher Power present, and leading to celestial determinations.

So warst du denn im Paradies empfangen,  
 Als wärest du werth des ewig schönen Lebens ;  
 Dir blieb kein Wunsch, kein Hoffen, kein Verlangen,  
 Hier war das Ziel des innigsten Bestrebens,  
 Und in dem Anschauen dieses einzig Schönen  
 Versiegte gleich der Quell sehnsüchtiger Thränen.

These were sixty minutes sunnier than sunlight : we had been speaking throughout indeed with the pressure and rapidity of those who meet after long separation, yet so profound was the sense of blessedness that penetrated them, they seemed to have run by in an absolute and soul-subduing silence. Though bearing with me nothing but what has been here noted for special or definite remembrance, when I left it was glorified in heart and head, as the Prophet coming from the Mount and the Vision, with the emanations of her presence.

## XVII

Che parlo ? o dove sono ? e chi m'inganna  
 Altri ch'io stesso e'l desiar soverchio ?

—But that night I could not read, I could not sleep, I was so disturbed by this dear image : by her first sad sweet gaze as we stood talking alone : by the smiles that followed : by the meeting for to-morrow promised as if the all to me was something now to Désirée. There had been a power on me as we spoke : a fascination gradually growing, I knew not how or why or to what issues : an awe I would call it, not fear, yet compelling me to silence : —as though the passage of some ultimate moment, some great crisis pre-ordained through eternity were striking on the silver bells of Paradise. . . . O voice so long

unheard, so late regranted, confiding depth of sincere and eloquent eyes, pursuing glance of the face more desired than the faces of Heaven, shaking me through the deepest depths of Resignation,—and what was your significance ?

Let the sweet heavens endure,  
Not close and darken above me  
Before I am quite quite sure  
That there is one to love me :

—Let me have my dream awhile, I thought, let me clasp it in its ineffable sweetness : at last, at last ; this ‘ beyond ‘ all beyond ’, to believe *Désirée* mine. . . . I dare not bid the dawning hasten, I walk as if amongst spirits in the under world, between death and life ; and what is prepared for to-morrow ? I cannot so think of Providence as to think that Vision and Hope granted only in celestial Irony ; that the Eternal Love can be so directed by the Illimitable Power:—O no : he hears, he cannot but hear, the supplication and sigh from boyhood to manhood. . . . As I looked up, there is a sign in heaven, I thought, more stars than the number appointed, and brighter. They answer—It is so : *Désirée* yours : the yearning of years fulfilled ; the heart’s desire accomplished : shame and sorrow transfigured to blessedness ; the crown of thorns glorified almost to the brightness of that God placed, after death and rising, on the brows of his Well Beloved. Faithfully I had served more years than Jacob for the true wife ; long I had waited ; the Merciful has heard :—the Desire cometh. . . . At last, at last : but the ecstasy of her dear love won such ! that with his own Best, He Himself could not better it.

XVIII I thought I had courage when beginning this narrative, to evade no conviction, and to shrink from no

remembrance ; to write as if sure I should die to-morrow. It is not quite so, or perhaps so, where self is concerned only : not in conjunctures where the dearer than self held a too fatal and predominant portion. And, again, how far such a crisis transcends the apparent and measureable force of the words or actions which accompanied or accomplished it !—What was it if, on the following day, both with absolute and fearless sincerity, clasped hands and unfaltering eyes, spoke the innermost secrets of thought and passion : if Désirée, with many tears, said It could not be otherwise, she cared for me too much not to tell all the truth ; how much she grieved for the sorrow she had brought on so early a friend, she could not tell : she would always give me a sister's affection ; and at this she tried to smile :—what, if I said O hear me this once,—trying to catch up the whole of Love and utter it,—that I had no other hope but her for life ; if the word were ever allowable to man, so it must be for ever :—she would not hold it, I hoped, mad perversity : I thought I had loved her truly ; after caring for her thus now near twenty years, it could not be otherwise ; it was better to speak once : O dear dear —— so it must be for ever :—yet can these syllables or any other within mortal attainment, equal the great stress and agony of that eternal farewell ? . . . We were silent ; had we heated our words sevenfold higher, we could not have reached what we would express ; we parted with one glance more ; we felt as if we had each said nothing.

XIX Thus the fate of two lives was decided. It was the end. ' Io non piangeva, si dentro impietrai ' : I went out : If I had sinned with Cain, the punishment could not have been more unendurable. . . . O now for the blessing

of remorse ! to think, I deserved it : God has done it : not that dear one. . . . Then life brought one of the contrasts so trivial in the telling, so poignant in the reality, by which life works out her romance also. A friend of my College days, a strong active man who had tried Canadian backwoods, and had now crossed the sea to provide himself in England with the plenishing for final settlement, met me within not many steps from the door where my heart had once beat so lightly ; and whilst I, not knowing how to recover my steps and common carriage in a world irretrievably changed, answered vaguely, required a promise to join himself and others that evening for a happy hour of welcome to the exile returned. I could, of course, have framed excuses for absence ; I could have failed in the promise without difficulty, and given the minutes to the solitary remembrance of a lost *Désirée*. But this would have been useless cowardice ; an idle flight. Whilst in the world, better follow its ordinary track : what mattered it now where I was ? It was meaningless to set apart these hours for indulgence in a sorrow to which no subsequent years would bring substantial healing or alleviation. All days, strive as I might, would be like this day : as well face the contest at once. Yet never more deeply than on that evening have I felt the terrible force of the line in which Wordsworth has described the omnipotence of Custom ; the inexorable inhuman Fate of our common every-day existence. To listen to bright words, happy hopes, and happy remembrances ; to join the jest, and smile with the smilers—not to share thus far in the circumstances of place and hour would have been childish sullenness, yet all seemed to pass in a posthumous life, a world of phantom

faces. I could not even envy the natural blessedness these dear friends enjoyed in their strength of youth ; the moral of the ' *Gaudeamus* ' song I heard, was something in which I had simply no portion. Nor, again, did that other inner life, that second self which years, it is one of their worst curses, sever always more distinctively from our outward bearing and actions, real as it was, appear itself less phenomenal and phantomatic ; I had outlived the self in self also.

As many a man has probably at times anticipated the feelings of the final moment, and pursuing himself in thought beyond the grave, said, ' Is this then death ? ' so amidst the din of revel, the lights and the laughter, I compared what may without untruth be named a living death with the narrations of prose or poetry, the picturesquely arranged scene of the novelist, or the well-balanced consolations of the preacher—and asked, was it so indeed ? Could ' remembering happier things ' bring no sorrow : the image of *Désirée* no blessedness ? Could passion come accompanied only by anguish, despair not lessen the intensity of love ? More fearful than the visions which met Dante on the narrow bridge, severer than the tortures of ' *Caina* ', such were the phantoms of that land into which I had now fallen : the ecstasies of ' ingression into the ' shadow ' of despairing. I thought almost that did *Désirée* now unsay the words of rejection, I could not regain happiness : as if that fatal change which the royal hero in Hades sighed over to *Odysseus* his visitant, had passed over me also : as if what was sitting there among friends at the feast, and seemed to hear song and story, was a ghost *ἐν νεκύεσσιν* : as if the God who would not save was in truth now unable to save him.

XX As I went home that night, I could have called on the wanderers of the streets for pity and the show of affection. Then to do the little acts of life—to re-enter a house quitted with hope so high, that the air seemed alive with happy voices, to see the rooms and familiar furniture again, even to move a book undisturbed since the morning, to go upstairs, to undress,—and that abyss between the present and twelve hours since. . . .

At such a moment, in whom must not the question rise, whether indeed any law binds him to live? This no doubt of all that can fall before man is the most solemn enquiry : if raised, Conscience demands that the calmest reason, the fullest correlation of fact and feeling (and how rarely, during the last fifteen centuries, have those who died and those who censured weighed the matter thus !) should be brought to the verdict. Such, even in the imperfect measure of humanity, might not be within my grasp at this hour ; better deferred for solitude, that one untried consolation remaining. There was, meanwhile, a stern satisfaction, a sense of security, in my absolute conviction that deference to the delay thus required by conscience was the one bar between myself and a conclusion which could, I thought, add remorse alone, if that would be indeed an addition, to the dark despair of a life that was itself no life.

Whether I moved or was still ; whether time passed or did not pass ; whether the day changed its name or no, seemed now indifferent. Yet I blindly longed for the morning, that I might make experience at least of what many had found, or said they had found, a secret of solace and distraction—the sight of Nature in her more energetic or her more lovely phases ; the solitude of great cities where

we are strangers ; the other solitude of sea or mountain. All remaining modes of vaunted relief, as recounted already, I have successively tried ; philosophy, religion, common sense, action, society, Time himself ' celui qui console ', and there was no essential consolation in them, vanity of vanities, and the fire at the heart yet. But serene Solitude,—this might perhaps be the one Power which never betrayed the soul that trusted her : I would ' love earth only for its ' earthly sake ', at least without the fever and despair of human passion. And yet,—it was with the unavowed desire to visit Valdicampo again, see once more the Tesoretto and La Collina, that I found my plans were framing themselves : well, well, it must be so ; and in a few days from the deck of the steamer—for this also lay within the journey's natural arrangement—I bade farewell in heart to England and to Désirée. At each long alternate roll of the waves the green coast seemed to uplift itself into the sky from the brown sea valleys ; within that house, a white star high among massy trees touched here and there with the first fires of autumn, by this time I knew she was. Désirée had proposed I should take her there during the first moments of meeting on (what was now) one week since—soon to be a month, a year. . . . Long accustomed to be as one of the family, to know all the fireside plans and wishes, the goings out and comings in, that *this* was the last of so many years' conversance with Désirée's household ways, touched me to tears. O that knowledge of the little things, how heart-shaking to surrender it ! A dreadful contrast, an antagonism representative of life appeared to evolve itself, *here* in the agitated sea and trembling vessel, *there* in the ' ancient peace ' and settled deep security of the

sole Home to which I could apply that dear and honoured title. As the window which might be hers, as the topmost gables, the trees above the roof, went lower on the horizon, the last link is broken, but a deeper dungeon opens for the prisoner : I died again, again I parted from Désirée. . . . We die often before we die—and then ?

XXI The first impressions of this journey, sunset at Dieppe where I landed, have been told already. Thence I went by Paris and South-Eastern France to Geneva. This book is not an itinerary, nor could I well write on scenes and cities which like a lifeless painted panorama, passed before distracted and alien eyes ; for these reasons I shall add no detail on a route which, in my belief, with a hundred others traversed and described as frequently, still, however, has not received that real and penetrating description which some one of insight and imagination, we may hope, will at last give it.

Wordsworth, amongst those I cannot but call feeble consolations, moral and material, with which two cheerful wanderers in his 'Excursion' attempt to correct the despondency of a recluse, as a sure remedy has counted an adventurous activity (his own practice and pleasure,) exercised upon the mountains. By the shores and famous hillside glens of the beautiful Lake, on its waters, or, again, on the higher peaks and glaciers they reflect beneath Clarens and Meillerie, I lingered for a time, to the best of my ability pursuing his counsels. But although I could not justly accuse myself of the pride or wilfulness reckoned by that great Seer among the causes fatal to the blessed influences of Solitude, Solitude brought me no tranquil restoration, no lightening to the burden of the mystery, the



leaden weight of a grief which he indeed had never experienced. Yet how gladly would I have taken any consolation which conscience could accept, and the heart respond to ! But as the music of waterfall and cattle-bell, the blueness of the skies and the glory of the glacier have a potential existence only until receptive eye or ear are turned towards them,—the sensation of pleasure derived from these and a thousand other Alpine experiences, once so intense that it worked in the blood with revel and intoxication, now, failing to find any kindred feeling, seemed to retreat within itself, or settle on the happy faces of those I met, and was ashamed to meet, wandering through that holy region. For that imperial palace I had lost was not to be thus obliterated from recollection. Rather Nature had set forth, I thought, the pomp of her magnificence in terrible might of mockery. ‘ All this was prepared for you ’, she said, ‘ for I framed you with capacity to enjoy and to comprehend it. Those in the parable have changed places ; I ‘ am Dives in Paradise ; look at me, Lazarus from the ‘ abyss of defeated hope, and cast aside your dreams ; I am ‘ peace and permanence ’. If I looked, for we are captives of the sense, and the eye which ‘ cannot choose but see ’ often leads the mind at its bidding,—I could not deny the lesson of Nature. In the soft lapping of waves on worn rocks or film-streaked sand bays, in the green night of forests, the heavy mountain-walls, the great shadows on the snow, the moonlight reflected from shining peaks, in the tenderness and the terror, I saw with bitter pleasure the vestiges of that life of content, pure and full, which exists within every one in image and anticipation ; fragments, as it were, of a vast plan of possible and forbidden

happiness :—Nature's unfulfilled intention. Merciless ! she smiles, and leaves man to his destiny. . . . This land also, one of her favourite thrones, had failed in its promise. When entering it, as through a golden green vine-trellis at Carouge above Geneva I saw first the glitter and the blue of that inland sea, a sudden warmth had passed through the soul's atmosphere ; I had recollected with what seemed hope a noble strain of consolation from a youthful letter of Keats :—' In truth, the great Elements we know of are ' no mean comforters ; the open sky sits upon our senses ' like a sapphire crown ; the air is our robe of state ; the ' earth is our throne, and the Sea a mighty minstrel playing ' before it '. Was not this bravely said ? Alas ! some readers will remember the confessions of despair wrung from this great genius on his last voyage after loving and losing—cries as of an archangel in agony. These I will not quote ; often I regret I read them ; I have found them nearer truth than the phrases of exultation.

XXII Thus I was glad now, if I may use the word any more with meaning, to leave that country. There was no consolation in her purple hills, or her emerald valleys ; in the azure of her skies, or the azure of her waters. These great elements *are* comforters thus far, that they impress with a sense of illimitable freedom and majesty ; they distract the soul during a moment's dalliance. But ask for a real compensation, turn to them for a solid sense of happiness. . . . O no: we find we have truly sought the bread of life from stones. In some mysterious mode our existence, the human soul itself, may be bound up with Nature's; but there is a barrier between, insuperable even to the energy of sorrow.

We cannot win their serenity from the skies, or their

strength from the tempests ; we are mocked by the blitheness of the bird, and the beauty of the flower. Behind all that amenity of Nature lies a stern passiveness to her children's fate ; a quiet irony smiles beyond the veil on ' the playthings of Providence '. The stars in their courses, the sun walking in glory, seem to reprove us ; but it is but for a moment. Nature's varied immensity has been spread about us ; we have looked on Alp or Atlantic, and felt it perhaps a reproach that the petty transience of our own sad thoughts should assert itself before spaces of a vastness so terrifying, a duration so aeonian. But the curtains are drawn ; we lie down to ask in vain for the beloved sleep, an hour's enfranchisement from this aching consciousness ; the window-space before us, now pale in the dawning, may open on Baiae or Monte Rosa ; what is man, compared with these ? but we know that, feeble as we are, within this littleness is concentrated all that has given us knowledge of Nature, and all that has made us capable of Passion ; that soul which is truly vaster than the vastness of stellar infinity. We know that few and weary may be the days of the years of this pilgrimage, but that our love has in it a portion of eternity ; that this pain. . . . Ah dearest ! could I more lose remembrance of thee than Earth solve her central allegiance, or forsake the Sun ? Can sea, or sky, or mountain-crest make compensation for the love sought in vain so fondly ? Can these insensate things ransom that loss for a moment—for a moment's moment—for an indivisible atom of these many years of regretting ? Can they restore me *Désirée* ?

XXIII There was no help for it : had I put a girdle round earth, here must have been the goal ; I must be

where I had first entered on the manly hope, where I had been with Désirée. ' Many years had indeed passed since, ' and I was then a child ' ; but I should know that house, and La Collina ; I would retrace my steps, and as if compelling Time to retrovolution, descend from Lombardy on those Tuscan sanctuaries. Again I saw Milan, the white Cathedral, the long array of watch-tower Alps from the summit across leagues of verdurous plain, sleeping in the ' ineffable peace ' of sunlight ; and, perhaps more impressive yet, that great Vision of the Saviour, pale and luminous as the star-cloud revealed by the farthest-piercing telescope, which through the genius of Leonardo has become to many hearts a haunting image and inseparable recollection of this capital. Then fair Verona, the city of Catullus, twice honoured by the scenic choice of Shakspeare, where the breadth of torrent Adige is darkened by the shadow of throbbing mills, and reflects tower and palace and palace-garden, black cypress and glowing vine,—mingling the russet stain cast below the Scaligeri fortress with violet and amber from encircling hills, and the opal of a twilight sky. How rich in appeals to thought and to thankful enjoyment was that walk, as from San Zeno I returned by the river-side and through lordly palatial streets like the architecture of a dream, till, approaching the central city, gay sounds of market-life from the Piazza delle Erbe and glancing lights radiated through the Gate of Gallienus ! Such things depress where they cannot elevate ; they are for the happy, I thought, and hastened on ; there would be scenes more congenial in the dolorous desolation of the Lido, in the calm decay of what was Venice. There church and palace have suffered a sea-change into something richer

and rarer than the firm land can show ; there the Masters of Colour pass before us like the pageantry of some celestial Day ; Bellini the dawning, and Titian and Veronese the mid-splendour, and a glory more spiritual than sunset in Tintoretto.—And at evening, as I wandered by Procurazie and Piazzetta, whilst the gondoliers lay asleep or singing in their boats, moored and covered for the night, beneath the hazy lamps which tremble by the Madonna on the Cathedral-side, and the tall spectre of that half-shadowed Campanile high over all,—I saw the pavement whitened by a hundred groups, gaily dressed and talking with subdued animation to the sound of song, the undulation of the violoncelli, the impassioned high notes of violin and clarionet, and beyond, the ghostly façade of San Marco, rising tier above tier like an alabaster altar-shrine,—an unearthly vision set there to reprove the Venetian crowd for their ‘ endless occupation without purpose, and idleness without rest ’. All this I saw, but found no glances which could make me less forlorn. . . . Often, rather, at these and similar moments, in crowded cities, came a spontaneous and irresistible feeling akin perhaps to what many a poor man has experienced at sight of the superabounding wealth of a Capital,—that there must be an error in the mind somewhere ; that I was deceiving myself ; that amidst this torrent of life and cheerful activity I had but to take my place, to stretch out my arms as it were, and re-enter on healthy happiness. ‘ Ah ! je voudrais, ne fût-ce que pour un moment, goûter encore de l’espérance ! mais c’en est fait, le désert est inexorable, la goutte d’eau comme la rivière sont taries, et le bonheur d’un jour est aussi difficile que la destinée de la vie entière ’.

XXIV On to La Collina :—something, I fancied, in this total eclipse and blankness of hope, some glimpse of heaven, some reconciliation with earth, was there : I did not enquire too curiously. Leaving Bologna by that eastern road, which at last (without touching Pistoia) through Cafaggiolo reaches Florence, I planned a day's walk ; to strike off into the mountains from Lojano across to the Collina route, where at Vergato or La Porretta I should find a diligence or carriage to Pistoia that evening. As indications the villagers gave me the sight of a great summit to the West, and the third stream I should cross ; this would be the Reno, followed by that too-well-remembered road, as I knew, almost throughout its course. Although already far above Mediterranean and Adriatic, both visible from that vast height, and by it lifted into what seemed solid purple walls against the misty and almost colourless horizon,—even at Lojano the outline of the wave-like hills was concealed and repeated by the massy chestnut woods which clothed them ; and, by one of those remembrances that Francesca in torments justly held the severest torture, I was reminded of the walnut-gatherers seen as I entered Trèves, now nine summers since, by the fair-haired peasant girls who collected the glowing fruit in rude maize-twisted baskets. But presently these signs of life faded, and I was in the trackless mountain ocean—a land of dark green and gray limestone, where a thousand unnamed peaks and masses of splintered rock innumerable, yet each with its own wild and individual shape, formed a landscape of seemingly endless and everchanging monotony. Shelley, whilst a boy yet on the banks of Thames, foresaw a similar scene, and, before his *Alastor*, wandered through it himself

by force of penetrative imagination. The solitude would have been in itself fearful, if to one utterly without hope fear were a passion possible any longer : but despair brings a strange indifference—an incapacity to feel surprize, a courage without exultation.

Yet there is a terror among the mountains, caused in part, I think, by that peculiar alternation we there experience between the sense of solitude and the sense of multitudinous and omnipresent life, which the ancients spoke of as the Sleep and the Immanence of the All. Rocks and snowy summits, trees and gradual green slopes, at such moments, appear trembling with hidden vitality, with a secret they would fain but cannot tell. And as wild birds and beasts will approach some men, when alone, and show a mysterious and touching sympathy, a need of affection—so the imprisoned soul of Nature yearns passionately, it may be, to hold communion with Man, to say the last word, to solve the riddle of creation. Or as in pantomimic scenes, where, at a silent touch, strange transformations appear, and figures evolve themselves from what had been the furniture of a room, flowers, or houses, so in the august theatre of Nature weird and elvish creatures, forms of perverted life are hidden, I have often thought, behind the myriad confusion of the moraine, passionless and heart-frozen spectres lie in the twisted lines and curve contemptuous lips in the sneer of the fissured glacier, Titanic shapes, an Isis hid by the veil, are within grey precipice and purple summit : the hush of noonday will be their signal for re-awaking : on their lips is Nature's message :—Speak, for thy servant heareth. . . . I turned from the unmerciful silence : and then, by a further phase in this fulness of life,

my own personality, as Wordsworth has observed, appeared to undergo division : I saw myself on lofty rocks, I seemed to precede or to linger behind my own footsteps.

XXV Meanwhile, more rapidly than I had anticipated, I reached the third torrent. Crossing a narrow path which led downwards to the white tower of a little village, else concealed, I sat down for midday rest on a worn boulder in the stream, whence nothing was in view but trees, and cliff, and water ; and above, the serrated outline of a vast hill, Monte Cimone I thought it was, whose loftiest peak, silvered with the soft glistening of first Autumnal snow, seemed to carry coolness and purity into the ' blue fire ' of a sun-flushed and vaporous sky. Forest on forest of fir hung on the mountain flanks, whilst here and there oak and ash spread their lighter foliage, like green clouds caught and suspended in a windless firmament across its dark abysses. I looked up, and felt the instinct to climb that summit strong upon me. Thence I could see the Alps : from the Alps, the heights of Auvergne : thence, in spirit, almost the western sea, the waters that bathed other forest-covered cliffs beneath the very home of Désirée. . . . . I thought of this, and something took away the power to climb. I looked at the fissured rocks, scored with lines in which the semeiomancy of old might have read the destiny of many lives ; and then,—the most living and imperative centre of attraction in such a scene,—on the dizzy waters, white with myriad bubbles. They seemed to drag my eyes downwards in their torrent precipitancy, to press against me with a colossal weight, and call with a thousand hoarse and hissing voices to the last submission, to cast in my lot here, to take my portion with the rootless



and shattered pine-trunk they were hurrying to the Adriatic.

O if these waters were but the too-long-desired and impossible Forgetfulness ! O for some voice more oracular than this coward-making Conscience, to say whether one defeated as I might not justly follow what seemed the invitation of Nature, end at once this vain earthly contest, and try, at least, the chance of a rest which the unreconciling years of life would never bring me !—So few thoughtful men, in later days, have cared even to consider this great question, so anxious has been rather the desire for life, so few perhaps tried thus, that my own weak and diffident reason was compelled to this inquisition. Is it some mere popular credence, some doctrine of the hopeful and the happy, some counsel of timorous worldly wisdom, deference to the gossip of men, secret belief in personal importance, or indeed the pure and imperative law within the soul by which I am restrained ? Assuredly the calmest and most deliberate consideration could be more required by no act in man's life than that of ending it : here I would interrogate the decisions of the Schools and of the Market-place, the creeds of the Den and the Theatre, and strive my best for an impartial judgment.

XXVI I desired it should have due weight ; yet the common opinion seems based on a hundred incoherent half-truths,—the natural love of life, expectancy of change, incapacity for depth and permanence of passion, reluctance to enquire firmly or act decisively. Irrespective of deeper arguments, these are the main reasons,—I will dare to say the inconclusive, on which the popular verdict founds itself :—

Unwillingly this rest  
Their superstition yields me.

But again : Ethics have varied : many men of pure life and deep thoughtfulness have died thus : Revelation appears to keep silence : mere inference, if confirmed by an army of teachers, cannot preclude question, on what that inference depends. To plead, that because birth is involuntary, death should be, is a trick of words, or a disguised and slavish surrender to Fatalism :—that it is more courageous to bear life than to end it, the ingenuity of one who had never approached death in thought. The argument of a great writer on Duty, A soldier may not desert his post, is an analogy which assumes the point in question. I at least had no home-duties left, nothing external to require life, except the vague right any country may be supposed to claim over her citizens ; the possibility of performing some useful work. I would not underrate even these general claims—but they lie within certain limits : there are sacrifices which they have no right to demand : some things are beyond endurance. The commonplace again of complacent consolation, prohibiting impatient rebellion to the decrees of Providence, by that wilful and often baseless imputation of motives, adds arrogance to mere assumption. I could not think so lightly of Providence, as to conclude that the sight of one soul struggling for years through a lost life, of this dreadful despair, would be a spectacle of satisfaction ; that this annihilation of confidence in the Promises was the so-called trial of Faith. I could perceive no conclusive reason why the limits of existence were more exempted from man's arbitration than the direction of its course : I could read neither in heaven or earth any canon of the Everlasting ; nor any enfranchisement but this from interminable and remediless regret. It might be argued,

and truly, that one should thus foreclose all future chance of happiness : be it so ; no man can exactly read his future : yet a calm estimate of our probable fate is often possible ; and, taking this, it would have been simple sophistry in me to expect any better days. To respect this impulse for death would have been not obedience to passionate overbearing regret, to any transient trenchancy of pain too sharp for endurance : I should have acted only upon the calm conviction that the one great and substantial felicity,—who that enjoys, has not acknowledged it ? the one realization of life, life with the Desired, was lost now beyond earthly or super-earthly restitution. Wiselier and better end this posthumous life ; I was dead already by loss of Désirée.

XXVII The torrent seems to run more surgingly and with deeper thunders : the aspen leaf falls into the quiet eddies, wrinkling round the miniature bays and headlands of the bank, little harbours of peace, granite-locked against the fierce wrath of outer waters. There the leaves dance awhile in ' pretty distress ' ; then, in the dusk of the breeze, sail out, and caught by the snow-cold shifting water-mounds dip from sight and rush onwards in their long passage to the Adriatic. One moment, and I might be like them : *οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή*—one moment, and dead as they to the thought of Désirée. Ah no ! that way lies no genuine relief : better be as now, without hope and without disloyalty : better bear this torture, if with it this tenderness. As in her bright childhood, I loved her yet ; I saw her as at the first meeting. Tears at thought of that fair creature confirmed the resolution towards what was perhaps the manlier course : but I could not but ask myself, whether in the long

array of merciless years, the days that could have no pleasure in them, no hour of home before the grave, even this resolution might not be one bitter regret the more.

It is a forlorn state to have no hope for life, and no courage for death : to confess, I cannot live, and dare not die. Had reason and endurance, conscience and passion, been given, and to this ending ? O that precious gift, I cried, to break with the first fall—to be spared this irony of existence—this necessity and chain of life—this retrospect of a ruined Paradise—this desert of unemployed affection—this dark terror and distrust of love—this atheism of the heart : and, worse than worst, this inseparable regret—the cry of these phantom voices—this blind importunity of desire—this ever-haunting image and presence of lost dear-ness—this remembrance, most cherished when least availing, that such things *were*, that were most precious to me—

A glory from above startled me amidst these thoughts : I looked : ‘ there was no fair fiend near me ’, no human or aethereal witness or monitor—only the sun’s last rays, burning like a civic illumination through a screen of lofty hazel on the west, and as fitful winds stirred the leaves, taking mysterious shapes, figures and letters of fire. Were these signs given to convey any superhuman intelligence ? —They warned me only that the day was spent ; that I must have wandered from the Collina road ; that at least I must hasten onwards. A sunset church-bell broke out into sudden sound below me : another answered from a higher hill, calling across the wild waste of rock and the dense summits of intervening forest. I need not repeat the tender lines, Dante may have imagined them on this very spot, exiled from Florence, which these voices

of 'dying day' brought before me, or what heart-shaking memories accompanied them, what visions of an English evening :

Melodious discord, heavenly tune harsh-sounding,  
 Ear's deep-sweet music, and heart's deep-sore wounding.

I rose and went upwards to the village thus indicated : I seemed to leave a portion of myself, a more immediate presence of Désirée, a something which appeared now almost regrettable, in that fancy-peopled scene of six hours' self-communion and solitude.

XXVIII Soon I was within the little Borgo, wandering through the main street, if street it could be called, where the gray flat-roofed cottages, festooned over door and window with almost grapeless vines, golden gourds, and maize in its long sheath suspended for winter use,—were scattered at every chance angle and varied height, as if dropped there in a child's random humour. This, a cottage-girl told me, swinging a pretty infant at whom I looked behind herself in alarm, was S. Damiano ; the village far below, Lagaro ; the hill, Monte Acuto ; and the torrent just beneath us, she knew no other name, but that it was an arm of the Setta. Further enquiries were useless ; this one narrow valley was all her geography : she directed me to the house of the 'Cura' for instruction and shelter. 'I should probably find Padre Girolamo with the Santa—he would receive me kindly'.

A little crowd of peasants, women chiefly in gay skirts, coloured kerchiefs, and large earrings, fine and filthy, were standing by the door of a small house nearest the white-washed church, gossiping whilst some entered and others came crossing themselves from the entrance. I wondered

at a sight unusual in the Italian villages, where a private house is rarely the centre of any crowd : but ' It is the ' Santa, it is the Santa,' was the only explanation these brown creatures, curious but civil, would afford ; and I followed the last ingoer up a narrow chestnut staircase to solve the mystery. Within a dark room, opening to the air only by the door and a small unglazed window, was something upon a low bed, drawn together in a strange knotted attitude, the hands pressed together over the bosom, the eyes half-open and perfectly expressionless. She, for it seemed what was, or had once been woman, was bleeding from her thin bare feet and forehead : I saw that she breathed : and yet no truly living creature could have endured the posture for more than a few moments. But whilst I stood there during some length of time amongst a few homely peasants, she remained rigidly unmoved and as if immovable. It was a condition, I thought, neither of death nor life ; an intermediate state, such as Eastern legend tells might be found (an ugly thought) within the graves of the vampyre-haunted.

This was truly a sad and a sorry spectacle ; yet it was one allowed, sanctioned, and honoured by the great Church of Western Christendom : it was the beatified consummation and ideal, I might add, the natural and historical development, of that ascetic life which Kempis had glorified in a book where I had been counselled to seek the truest uninspired consolation by well-intentioned friends at home. At home ! for so, transplanted suddenly into this strange scene, England, though there too I was homeless, now appeared. Even there, not less than here, I must be apart from Désirée ; but even there again, I could hardly be

nearer her than now : at — I could not think of her with more immediate and absolute tenderness than at S. Damiano. So our own thoughts take us prisoners in scenes the wildest and remotest : far stranger often than the strange is the familiar. Then the church-bell sounded again above us : an old priest by the figure's bedside, murmuring a few words, pointed to a white crucifix hung opposite beneath a withered garland : she feebly raised her eyes with a look not of hope or despair, but wistful resignation ; he wiped his forehead with gentleness, and signed to us to quit the chamber.

XXIX In so small a village it was needless to enquire whether this were Padre Girolamo, when, presently descending, he saluted me with an open manly air, and at once added an invitation to his own house, adjoining that we had left. There was something far more attractive than is general with Italian country clergy about this priest : a portion, I suppose, of the noble mountaineer spirit ; simplicity of manner, clearness of eye, a smile which white hair and the innumerable wrinkles of the face could not entirely deprive of youthfulness. In a moment he had explained the error of my journey ;—penetrating too far upwards within the glen, the third torrent I had reached was not the Reno, but a branch of the divided Setta : the Collina road lay in the valley beyond, parted from us by the mountain ; crossing this, a four hours' walk, I should fall into it at Sambuca. Meantime, the low room whither he had brought me, its furniture one table, one chair, and a stone bench fixed to the further wall, might be, he could offer no more, my night's resting-place.

Whilst his niece boiled the chestnut-meal we sat down

and talked : we were friends already. The priest had seen no Englishman before, and his main impression of England appeared to be her greatness and justice. Then, (for with the courtesy of cities he had the curiosity of solitude), it was necessary that his guest should explain something of his journey ; and as the readiest explanation, suppressing only the mention of my journey's end, *that* was too near to hazard comment, I told him the literal truth. This indeed brought me the kind commonplaces of consolation, counsels of hope, news on the shortness of life, and the hundred other contradictory anodynes of sympathy. But all was over-balanced by the relief of confession to the human soul I should never meet again, by the pride of speaking the praises of Désirée in that strange land, by the inseparable pleasure of saying Désirée once more. Presently he was silent ; the expression of his face, changing, became less human ; he said with enthusiasm, ' What are these sorrows ' of which you think so much, and they are severe, I do ' not wonder, compared with those of our Crocefissa of ' S. Damiano ? Yet she bears them with patience, with ' exultation ! they are signs of God's special favour to his ' Saint. What is poor human love, compared with these ' holy ecstasies ? But you are a Protestant ', he added good-naturedly, ' and perhaps do not know the grace vouchsafed ' in the Church. Or do such things happen amongst you ' also ? '

I said ' Not exactly ; the world was a large place, and ' England at a great distance '. . . . . ' There was something repulsive, an odour as it were of the earth, earthy, in the approximation of theological controversy ; nor indeed did this appear my host's natural element. To escape such



discussion, I told him I had read the story of the Addolorata of the Tyrol, and of Maria Lazzari of Capriana, and asked the particulars of his parishioner's story.

XXX Padre Girolamo was surprized at this little knowledge ; it was a sign of grace, and he told his tale with a manifest belief that the strange record of muscular weakness and nervous exaltation could not fail to work on the hearer a portion of the miracle which he believed it. It is generally a relief to turn from religious theory to practice with its by-play of natural charities and human frailty, but in this instance I could not find it so. It was true that he prefaced the narration with a high-sounding sentence from Kempis : ' *Pone te, sicut bonus et fidelis servus Christi, ad portandum viriliter crucem Domini tui* '. But to hear that a poor orphan girl, Immacolata Angiolieri, from her childhood had been so impressed with the heroic example set by St. Rose of Lima, that, not satisfied with disfiguring her face, or washing her hands in quicklime, she had literally mixed wormwood with her food, torn her flesh with a thousand daily stripes, and then crawled to a bed of nettles :—that at eleven years of age she had crossed the long mountain ridges to Alvernia, and, like Angela della Pace, there seen St. Francis bearing the ' jewels of ' his stigmatization ' :—that she had retraversed personally the mysteries of the Passion, and finally, with Cecilia de' Nobili, received the final grace of the ' divine wound ',—the crowning crisis which laid her on the bed whence the village belief was she would rise in death by absolute corporeal assumption ;—was there anything in this blasphemous piety, for between that name and cataleptic idiocy I could see no choice, to raise a rational mind to celestial things, to

make human love, poor human love appear an unreal, an unholy aspiration? Nor, from another aspect, was it a lesson less affecting to consider that a thousand authorities justified Padre Girolamo in calling this a triumph of Christian self-rejection, that the last, the logically consistent result of the 'doctrine of sorrow' preached at least in so many lands, was realized in that exhibition of immoral morality. 'The Santa' (so anticipating a title which, if Rome lasts, would be hers, he called her) 'has thrown aside every earthly wish, every brief and vain desire, every thought of joy; whilst on earth she has received the reward of Faith, she is incorporated in heaven; she is identified with the Divine Will by celestial Love.' My own fate, and what I saw or read of man's at large was to me, I have already said, a problem of anxious astonishment; why we are, and why we suffer; the triviality and the magnificence of life:—but was the abyss bridged by that strange and fearful example of rapt severance from the common conditions of existence? 'Man,' said the wise Pascal, 'is neither beast nor angel, but man.' Ah, better human tears, better this blank hopelessness, better the most humiliating confessions of ignorance, than such solution of the mystery.

My host looked fixedly at me as I sat in silence whilst he completed his narrative; he took my hand gently; some tale of feelings far past in his own life seemed to be on his lips; but he refrained, and through the remaining hours we talked on indifferent things, nor was the Crocefissa again spoken of.

XXXI Next morning the sky was covered with large slow clouds, the first I had seen for many weeks: they

veiled the sun, and seemed to make the day an hour later : from what, compared with an English October, had been summer-tide, we had passed into late autumn. Padre Girolamo now doubted whether without a guide I could cross the ridge of Monte Acuto to the main road, and hospitably offered his own attendance. But who would carry a witness of his shame, a human eye to see him disfigured perhaps, like the lost Archangel alighting on the wall of Paradise, by incontrollable influx of sorrow ? I longed to be alone once more, to take the thought of Désirée in solitude with me to the Tesoretto. Whilst thus hesitating, I mentioned the name ; he smiled, and said If so, there was no necessity for transit to La Collina : by following this glen to the watershed, and thence tracking the Ombrone, I should before long pass the village of S. Quirico, and then a great wooded hill above that house. He smiled again : I could see,—I saw with pain at thought of what exultation would on my last visit have attended such discovery,—a consciousness in his mind that this was the secret shrine of my pilgrimage. The Pistoian family, who owned the place, he said, were absent ; their steward Antonio was a parishioner of his own, and would, he knew, on mention of his name willingly admit me to the house and find a lodging. Meantime the clouds had partly broken ; I feared further questions, and bade San Damiano and its kindhearted priest farewell.

Directly above the village the glen narrowed : I am in what might have been Tennyson's vale of Ida, ascending between walls of imminent crag, stained with pale lichen, and leaning back into perfect buttresses based on soft cushions of moss, each cushion a green constellation,—or

splintered into fern-filled chasms. Below is the torrent, alternate snow and sapphire, falling here in woven veils of foam, and there wreathed over the sunken boulders in those exquisitely tender and living curves for which science has no terms, and art no mirror. Above, the giant masses are interpenetrated by larch and mountain ash, thick with the cluster flames of vermilion fruit: between the trunks the torrent-wet surfaces gleam, and the white arms of the mist push themselves on and linger:—whilst here and there, caught through lanes of cloud and foliage, the majestic peace of sunny summits surprized me, travelling slowly across the drifted sky, as if things no longer of earth, and exalted into aethereal isolation.

Now, the companionable torrent which for two days had been with me like a living creature, was silent, or trickled only in faint threads. It was perhaps a foolish fancy, but, unwilling to part as it were silently and without recognition, when nearing the head of the pass I knelt close to the mossy rocks, sprinkled with a crimson lichen as if by some war-menacing shower of blood, and listened for its last murmurings. On the right, through a long lateral valley, I now saw the faint violet peaks of the great Col dell' Abbetone: a chill wind, not the welcome a traveller might have anticipated, blew from the south: it was the summit: ten steps more and I should overlook the Valdicampo. I looked, but a vast wall of mist was moving up the gorge: like an avalanche, it blotted out the landscape on its march; and where its wintry whiteness met the blue sky, the blue seemed to tremble and melt before it. Ramifying from this chaos, a great 'branchy' cloud (to use the noble epithet of Lucretius) rose high and

wreathed itself above the last peak of Monte Acuto into the region of sunlight, blazing through the pale haze like a pillar of amethystine fire. This, I thought, was the last hint of real day ; the mist threw its shroud over me, and the quick steps of descent carried me at once into that valley of dead hope and the ghosts of tender memory.

XXXII Yet, vivid as that memory seemed, I found (who has not found it with bitter regret, when he revisited his Yarrow ?) that I had overrated the accuracy and the number of my recollections. I could see the valley now ; for, descending, I left the mist gradually above me : it became a cloud overhead : it broke : the sun came forth again, and flickered on the path, a wild mountain track torn with the fir-trunks which yoked oxen were dragging towards the first Tuscan village. The leaves lay beneath my feet that had budded and burst when I was triumphant : the bare net-work of boughs was a parallel for me. They would be restored to life and greenness next year, and next ; ‘ the tree,’ in Virgil’s charming phrase, ‘ would go ‘ forth towards heaven with its happy boughs ’. . . . A few steps more, and I was now within a great chestnut-grove. I looked around with a kind of agony, knowing what the place was, but unable to remember it. There was no sign in the scattered rocks, no Spirit in the woods to repeat the voices of long-ago : the branches had grown thick on the highest crest, and shut out the view over Valdarno : the pillar carved with the words I had seized on as the device of life had been uprooted by the labourer’s hand, and broken to dust on the village highway. Nor was there a less change within the traveller.

Thus it was natural that, as I still advanced, the details

of the path hence to the Tesoretto should have faded from my memory ; that with a gentle shock of surprize I recognized presently the white unaltered walls and heavy ridges of the roof and store-tower with two unglazed windows and open loggia, rising from the dusty and neglected garden, bright with autumnal flowers and the amber burning of the trellised vine-leaves. But, where so much had been forgotten, that tower revived a remembrance dormant for now fourteen years, and with all its original force compelled me to seek, where the roof-cornice joined the loggia, a memorial which I hardly dared, yet longed to see again. There a dark window, a square of shade, was sunk into the wall : there had been Désirée's own room in the irrecoverable hours. Till the sun went down I sat and gazed on this : Ah I cannot believe that I have lost her : I had no other thought. I looked and looked again ; God, in his mercy, late but sure, would restore blessedness, vouchsafe the vision of Désirée. She would be there, she *must*, and look me into Heaven, in one moment ransom many years of anguish. . . . Ah I cannot believe that I have lost thee. . . .

The roses threw flaming glances to me from the luxuriant garden beds, and the starry jessamine gazed with a thousand eyes from her green darkness : tall spikes of some thick-clustering flower rose like blue spires towards heaven : strange green and crimson creatures, where I sat, climbed and sprang from blade to blade of the yellow grass, and fulfilled the functions of a mysterious and happy life : the low note of the wood-pigeon tolled at intervals from a hollow, and the air trembled with the shrill vibrations of cicale : whilst overhead, in the sunset glow, the

‘ burning threads of woven cloud unravelled in pale air ’.  
 Nature proclaimed her sweet insulting invitations to impossible happiness :—O that her hills would fall on me, her mountains cover me, the earth swallow me quick up, forgetfulness at last environ me.

Hier oben aber, wie grausamlich  
 Sonne und Rosen stechen sie mich !  
 Mich höhnt der Himmel, der bläulich und mailich—  
 O schöne Welt, du bist abscheulich !

XXXIII Alas, one passes through these things, and lives. I ran round to the entrance, through the hall to the room where we had been together, and the passages above, and her room, and cried Désirée !—but the echoes were my only answer, unless (who knows ?) the angels threw their mockery into its long reverberations. What trace should now be here, and years between which, in the phrase of Tacitus, were a great space of mortal life, of an English maiden’s transient inhabitation ? Yet I looked thirstingly around : in the madness of despairing love, I thought I could have created relics . . . ah ! it is those who have not put faith to the proof who believe in her miracles. But I saw hung against the wall an old local almanack, thick with names of Saint and Festival, and headed by some rude woodcut, marked *Maria Santissima dell’ Umiltà*. It bore no date : the figures of the year had been either omitted or removed. Long I studied it : this had been, it struck me now for the first time, the very season of my former visit : I endeavoured to recall the exact day and week, and by comparison with their sequence in this almanack discover whether her eyes could, for if so, they necessarily would, have rested upon it. The last rays

of the sun were shifting their rosy lustre over the wall, darkness already filling the room from below like a bath, when, whether for blessing or for banning, I knew not, I convinced myself that the paper had been truly placed there in the fatal year—that the anniversary of my own visit was now passing over me.

There were steps meanwhile about the house : and presently the steward-gardener left in charge appeared with a tall hanging oil-lamp. His first words, a voluble old man's apology for the state of the rooms,—owing to his wife's absence, he said, that day at the market of Pistoia, relieved me from the fear of a scene of explanation and surprize : but surprized me a little with the sense that I seemed again an expected guest at the Tesoretto. Was I not, he continued, a friend of the Englishman who, eight days before, had also, he heard, been noticed in the village close by, wandering round, and asking leave, when he should next pass that way, to go through the house ? This claim to welcome I could not allege : but I gave him Padre Girolamo's message : it was my wish to stay, how long I could not decide, here or in the neighbourhood. Antonio said, this was enough : he had in fact prepared a room for the expected visitor : that might be mine. And too glad to be spared further discussion, fearing, and yet half, hoping, that this old man, of whom I had no remembrance, might remember the days of Désirée, I asked no more, and consented.

It may be added, that who this Englishman might be, or what his purpose, I neither enquired or learned. Was he, too, seeking the phantom of a lost treasure ? It struck me afterwards as strange, that on the day Antonio



mentioned, I, walking on the Piazzetta of Venice in the long evening, had so vividly painted to myself the whole aspect of this house, that I thought I should find nothing there unfamiliar. There are certainly mysterious refractions and presentiments in the landscape within the soul ; moments, hardly traceable, when time seems to suffer transient suspension ; dark spaces during which man's spirit appears to wander from itself, to part from conscious identity. But by the very facts of the case we are unable to trace the result or co-ordinate the experiences of such inner alternations : only at times we seem to meet in the present something already familiar in the past, feel perplexedly that we have lived through the actual events before, and find the dream of life even more dreamful.

XXXIV Let this be as it may, it was a surprize when the old man led me back to my own remembered room, a relief when without further parley, he said, ' Whilst ' I chose I might remain there, and easily make arrangements with the family.' He brought bread and last year's raisins, and the weak wine of Serravalle, and left me with the wish of a repose not to be granted. Then began, (and when to end ?) that heavy curse of wakefulness . . . one deceives oneself during the day, and books, and work, and other men, and the sight of Nature, distract the soul a little ; but I learned henceforth to look with terror for the approach of hours when no one moment of happier thought would break the waste monotony, the spiritual night of loss irretrievable, the blind sense of what I could not forget, and might not think of . . . the almost incredible conviction that here, on this day, I had been blessed with happiness

so august and plenary, that Azrael might have carried me from earth through the gate of death to Paradise, and I should have known no transition.

In one of the Poets is a picture of more than common vividness : I had admired it often in other days : now it was with me too

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,  
Desiring what is mingled with past years,  
In yearnings that can never be exprest  
By sighs or groans or tears—

—O that ‘has been,’ of all human phrases most pathetic ! With this consciousness I lay down : with this thought I was to ‘fall on sleep’ : and no more bitter fruit on that first fatal day could have been plucked in Eden from the ambrosial Upas of knowledge. It was to confess half a life wasted : on the very scene of hope triumphant, to acknowledge shameful defeat, to be face to face with a loss for which death could bring no cure, and heaven no recompense. During these years sorrow had experienced its seasons ; resignation that could not comfort, and endeavours which closed in fruitlessness : despair : renunciation : and then, the reluctances of remembrance, the reassertion of Love’s supremacy, the eternity of passionate regretting. Prayer and patience and submission and the counsels of the wise and the lights of example and the society of friends and the distraction of daily labour, the freedom of activity, the enthrallment of studies,—in the sad sobriety of reason I had made trial of every anodyne held restorative . . . and with this result ! The agonies of the awakened conscience, the stings of remorse ;—*these* would have been actual delight compared with this bare

conviction of bereavement inflicted by the Best Beloved, this blow given by the tender hand, this sunless sterility. The sinner repents, I thought ; as the sorrow, so in a certain true sense, the relief is in his own hands ; but in this more than lifelong prospect before me, the consoling Angel himself would search in vain for any hint of consolation.

XXXV These imaginations held me long : and then silently as sunrise or the soul in the beginnings of life, came the vision, and through the death of sorrow and sleep I passed into the forecourts of recovered Paradise. There is something, I know, less direct, less simply true, in metrical words : yet, as I threw the circumstances of the dream into rhyme and stanza, it will be best now to give it so.

Alone alone with Thee—  
Thee only in dreams on a crystalline Sea—  
Between two heavens poised and gliding thus ;  
Our boat the filmy nautilus  
Ribb'd as the thousand-tempest-sifted snow  
Where mountain-roots divide,  
And underneath long-furrowing torrents go,  
A heaven above, below,  
And Darling by my side :—

Then o'er those silver seas  
Twice went the shiver of a crisping breeze ;  
And our two childly Souls within it came,  
And straight retenanted the frame.  
And all the dear-bought lore of life, the weight  
The fever and the fear,  
The blinding veils thick Custom weaves and Fate,  
Fell from us as we sate,  
And left the vision clear,

I look'd—I hung on Thee  
 With fearless eyes, and fearless answer'd me.  
 A light warm hand across my shoulder fell :  
     ' O Love, and I have much to tell ',  
 I cried, ' since last we parted, since, so long,  
     And all that interspace  
 One dreary dream, one dim phantasmal wrong,  
     Exiled in glamour strong  
     Far from thy blessed face.

' 'Twas but a dream, I know,  
 A magic madness that enthralled me so :  
 Some nightmare foul delusion, well I wot :  
     I dream'd my Darling loved me not.  
 And many months against the web I strove  
     That held my soul asnare ;  
 Doom'd to a lurid waste and void of love,  
     Pursuing my lost dove  
     With faint feet and despair.

' A phantom life : a curse  
 That blanch'd the greenery of God's universe :—  
 I died, methought, yet breathed perforce again,  
     And walk'd a spectre among men :  
 And shared the feast, and ran the common round.  
     And smiled on friends that smiled,  
 And work'd my work, and mask'd the deep-sore wound  
     In that sick sorcery bound,  
     Beguiling and beguiled.

' Weep not, mine only Love,  
 My truest of the true, my faithful Dove !  
 'Twas some assayal of my youthful heart ;  
     And God that gave has heal'd the smart.  
 Do not I kiss the tear-drops from thine eyes,  
     The paleness from thy brow ?  
 True Heart, and, purer than these azure skies  
     Mine own without disguise—  
     Ah ! we are waking now.

' But O for it was sore,  
 A death in life, to think thee mine no more—  
 To feel the loss, yet loving thee no less :  
     All life without thee purposeless.  
 Prayer link'd in vain to prayer, and heavenward cries  
     That back in thunders roll—  
 And very God was blotted from the skies  
     Before the blinded eyes  
     And atheism of the soul.

' And ever as I strove  
 Came doubts and waverings in the Faith of Love :  
 And ever thy sweet face before mine eyes  
     And dreams of ancient Paradise.  
 And that Loved most when Lost—the chaliced gall  
     Of exile-absence tasted—  
 God spare thy true heart, whatsoe'er befall  
     That last worst curse of all—  
     Affection wasted.

' Weep not, mine only Love,  
 My truest of the true, my faithful Dove :  
 It was a dream—a spell—I know not how—  
     Own Darling, we are waking now.  
 Look out on heaven—all heaven upon this bay ;  
     A second sky below ;  
 Where star-eyed lilies amorous cadence sway  
     Within their crystal day  
     And emeraldine glow.

' Where through tall coral glades  
 Weird forms of life hang o'er their flickering shades,  
 Shaking pale beads of air from pearly sides ;  
     And upward each pearl slowly glides,  
 Hollowing the surface as it breaks in light :  
     As from some poet's brain  
 Well the deep lustrous thoughts, that as they smite  
     The common air, unite,  
     And feed the breath of men.

' Where other sapphires lie  
 Than earth's pale gems, each a condensed sky :  
 And crimson-hearted rubies, deep as Love,  
     Stain the translucent wave above,  
 Dilating in slow throbs of sanguine flame :  
     And pale pure pearls beside  
 Blush opalescent hues, a roseate shame,  
     And cluster to thy name,  
     Self-ranged beneath the tide.

' So blush not Thou ; for Truth  
 Owns thee her own from thy first tenderest youth :—  
 Truth's own : mine own : since that immortal day  
     When first I saw thy childhood stray  
 Plucking the rose-enfoliated almond bough,  
     And call'd thee by my side,  
 And felt thy careless ringlets on my brow,  
     And all the spirit bow  
 Before the destined Bride :—

—' Alone alone with Thee,  
 Thee only, as then, and on this crystal sea :  
 O I have words now that had no voice then  
     In that still tumult of sweet pain :  
 Listening the lordly music of the spheres  
     Oracular of Thee :  
 The promise of th' illimitable years,  
     The dearer bliss that tears  
     Wiped off have ransom'd me.

' For that great joy to be  
 Seated by thy side and thine arm around me—  
 'Twas but the prelibation of the bliss  
     Reserved for such an hour as this :—  
 Here let Time stay : God has no joys in store  
     Past that one word " mine own " ,—  
 —I wake :—morn's scornful sunbeams blanch the floor.  
     I go forth as of yore  
     Bearing the curse alone.

XXXVI It was so next morning. I went forth ; I exhausted the last, hope I cannot say, fond foolish fancy, the last event of life,—and that how shadowy !—by the second ascent of La Collina. I rested again on the summit ; again looked on the white cottage, on the curving road to the Tesoretto. What fatal Power is it which carries us to the violation of spots so sacred to recollection, which raises a mirage vision to our fancy before arrival, and then in place of the desire of the eyes, in place of some sign of wrath adequate to account for calamity,—shows us all things pursuing their common way, and Nature and Circumstance implacable or indifferent to our heart's despair ? I saw the dry blanched road, the tracks of other wheels, the great trees that had witnessed our parting, the village mother leading up the child born long after. Others passed presently, dressed for some festival in the city below :—

One walk'd between his wife and child,  
With measured footfall firm and mild,  
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood  
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,  
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,  
The little maiden walk'd demure,  
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,  
My frozen heart began to beat,  
Remembering its ancient heat.

Although in all details not repeated in Italy, this charming picture, and the purpose which it serves in the poet's

argument came into my mind, but with a double portion of almost wrathful bitterness—‘Look what thy future ‘might have been,’ the Voice within me said :—‘Look ; ‘and she with herself has exiled thee from it for ever, for ‘the ages of ages. After the eighteen years gone by, ‘as well hope to be literally born again, as hope afresh. ‘Too late, too late to seek a newer world. The irregressive gate is passed : *lasciate ogni speranza* ’—And there was no second softer voice to reply. . . . O it might suit the song to silence by that argument the complainings of a morbid melancholy, but could the ruined hope of life be restored by this or any other prospect of another’s unattainable happiness ?

XXXVII I sat down : my early years were with me : the tale of hours, visionary now and vain, yet devoted to a desire and a purpose which had been the most real of life’s realities, the blessing without which it were truly better not to be. These years, I could not disguise it, had brought a lesson so profoundly sad, at war so absolutely with the teaching both of the world without and the world within the heart, that I hardly knew how to face conclusions which yet appeared irrefutable. If, whilst yet a boy, some friend of larger experience and versed in the defeats of hope, passing by me in my dreams and exultation had recalled the Preacher’s pathetic phrase, and said, ‘Childhood and Youth, and Love with them, are Vanity,’ I should have derided the warning. Was it on my own merit that I relied ? Did I not confess my want of worthihood ? O yes, and with remorse deep and continual : but there was truly no thought of self, my reliance was not *there* ; I loved her with such strength and identification, that of



her love I could doubt no more than of my own. Let the life-weary king say what he would, mine (I should have answered the scorner) was a better faith : that affection given, I knew, by God's own degree could not fail of affection returned : that my trust was anchored on Heaven and Désirée.

O blessed faith, and lost beyond earthly redemption ! that angels might envy, and ruined by her voice who revealed it ! O for one hour of that innocent confidingness I forfeited without transgression—one return in the warmth of reality to what I know only by remembrance—one instant's Childhood !—The phantoms seem to rise at my call : I see the image of Long-ago, the visionary child, the features honoured from youth, the truthful and confiding eyes, the frank smile of undoubting heartsome affection, Désirée as I saw her here : speak :—Was this indeed so predestined from the beginning ? Was there no truth in the prophecy of childhood ? Was there no prophecy in the omens of youth ? Was there no confidence in the confiding : no tenderness in the tenderhearted : was there no love in love ? Could it have been decreed so ?—mercy unmerciful : womanhood pitiless : the cry of nature hushed : the hands of supplication cast off : affection despised, the honour of years lightly valued : the loss absolute : the regret implacable, the farewell everlasting ?

XXXVIII I have little to add to a narrative, as it is perhaps too extended. There is no need to enter on later details, the where or whither of a life which, in any human sense, had lost its purpose and ideal in Désirée. Already the bitter consolation of calling these things to memory

has passed : the dull narcotic of this mechanical exercise is exhausted of any palliating virtue. 'Non-existence,' as the deep-thinking poet of Athens said, 'is inestimable' : Better, no doubt, not to have been, but, having been, better to have loved and lost, better expiate even thus the crime of love, than not to have known her. Here, at least, if here only, there is no regret for the past : here, if in this flux of life, man may anywhere possess assurance, no shadow of change possible in the hereafter. These confessions began with protest against the common doctrine on the fate of sorrow ; and so with calm conviction I may close them. Biologists tell us, one essential difference between substances animate and inanimate is, that the prime elements, compounded in these by a simple binary arrangement, are in the former united by force of life into subtler and more complex combinations. And thus, by the long lapse of years and of passion, often it has seemed to me,—and that the more forcibly, when endeavouring, it might be, in the hope to save some happiness from the wreck, to persuade myself I might elsewhere find a return of so long-rejected affection—that this love was incorporated within me by indissoluble immanence : that by some spiritual *anastomosis* the one thought of the soul had been transubstantiated into that bodily frame to which the soul is welded : that every drop which visits this sad heart has in it something, I know not what, but something still of Désirée.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me :  
 Whatever change the years have wrought,  
 I find not yet one lonely thought  
 That cries against my wish for thee.

—Would he who wrote this have written it the less, if he had felt at the moment that the desire was unattainable ?

XXXIX Without presumption, the narrator may believe he has reached the final experience, the latest crisis at least, of life : that he sees the dead desert level before him, the array of the unreconciling years. There I shall confront the gradual indifference of friends to one inevitably dissonant from their tone of unmerciful and healthy happiness, the world's bitter scorn of sorrow,—the absence of Désirée : there patience will bring no peace, and submission no comfort, duty be without reward, and love almost without loveliness. So fearful a prospect, must it not lead anyone to ask whether the wiser part were not to relinquish the vain warfare, give hands of surrender to victor Fate, and take my Lady Death for Bride, where no further hope remains ? If, not from deference to this world's contempt or censure, but to the soul's own ignorance of the further world, we refrain,—we may live, it must not be concealed from self, to regret the years that are to come. ' O that I might have my request, and that ' God would grant me the thing that I long for ! What is ' my strength, that I should hope ? and what is mine end, ' that I should prolong my life ? ' The one only left is now the Patriarch's pathetic prayer :—yet this consummation even may annihilate the remembrance, which with its bitterness whatever, I would not willingly surrender, if Heaven itself is to be gained by transit of Lethe. Life is dark, but death is darker. *Vivi adunque : nullo ti puo di questo privare.*

But, ah ! dear one—whose name I think, but shall not even write henceforward,—thus to die, and without having

lived, is the true sting of death. Of what may lie beyond, when we have said inscrutable, we have said all. That veil will be rent for us by no earthquake : nor can we foretell if the great darkness beneath which we shall pass will dawn into humanly conscious resurrection. Like the Lady of Athenian drama, οὔτε τι τοῦ θανεῖν προμηθῆς, τό τε μὴ βλέπειν ἐτοῖμος, when surrendering in the reluctances of final agony the last thought and fond movement of affection towards thee, the soul will know no more than at the hour of birth what manner of life shall follow this which she has purchased so dearly. . . . O what blessedness beyond prophetic anticipations, should that new world be the completion and sunlight ideal of this—should we retain all that was pure in mortal hope and aim, our memories of the earthly past, our own better selves in glorified but unbroken identity ; should faithfulness at last meet with the one reward, love so long given with love at last returned, at last—Fool, again the dream, the fancy ! So fearful is the mystery of earth, are not things done here which cannot be undone by Thrones and Dominations, by all the Powers of Heaven ?

I think I have loved truly : I struggled long : I have been corrected in anger, and brought to nothing : *do manus* : it is in vain. Far out in the western sea there is a broken rock ; the birds of heaven know it, the Atlantic smiles around, the sunlight sleeps on it for a summer's day in a peace which seems of more than earthly peacefulness. But the moon has arisen, she draws the waters toward her, caressingly at first, then more and more angrily they heave themselves and beat :—the heavens are gradually overshadowing, but the moonbeams work behind ; Ocean

obeys, the white-edged waves set their teeth against the pillar. As they rise to cover it, the warfare and the antagonism deepen, louder and higher the voices of sea and land are heard, some great drama appears in agitation between living Powers, some superhuman catastrophe,—long visible by the light of foam, by the straggling and misty stars, by the moonbeams seen as if in another world spread upon the far horizon. The waves press on, they cast themselves in columns over the rock, the sea boils as if impassioned by inner fires : *here* is haste, and night, and thunder, and final agony ; *there*, above the solid clouds, peace and holy light, and the fair face of the dominant spirit. She looks down : but the night has gathered far beyond her piercing, and the issue of that conflict is blotted out :—hoarse shouting, sounds as if of beating hands, prayers, and cries, and crashing weapons : then silence. . . . Is it peace or death ? There is no answer, no atom of light in earth or heaven, the waters are voiceless now, and the last eddy circles away into infinity and the blackness of darkness.

The tide has its reflux, and the storm its pacification : but there is no better day for this evil, no after-hope of any blessing.

Ah, dearest—I said to die unsatisfied is the worst bitterness of Death : but this I find bitterer still, that I may not dare to promise thee an eternity of affection, this love from childhood through the real Ever.

## REFERENCES AND TRANSLATIONS

Thinking the catalogue would be unnecessary to those who love poetry, and tedious to those who do not, I have not included in this Index references to the shorter quotations and allusions in the text. This addition would indeed have almost amounted to another volume. The writer has borrowed on all sides : he is more Editor than Author : readers inclined to approve any single thought or phrase will do well (he warns them), to reserve their favour for those, *qui ante nos nostra dixere*.

JUNE, 1857.

## PAGE

- 2 (1) From all who know love by trial I hope to find pity, if not pardon.—PETRARCH : *Son.* i.
- (2) I am not made like any other men I have seen.—ROUSSEAU : *Confessions*, B. i.
- 3 They put up a fine statue to Time, with this inscription, TO THE CONSOLER.—VOLTAIRE : *Les deux Consolés*.
- 4 AUGUSTINE : *Confessions*, B. xi, c. 2.
- 5 Infantia mea olim mortua est, et ego vivo.—*Confessions*, B. i, c. 6.
- 8 (1) Little one, I saw you gathering the dewy apples in our orchard-croft with your mother, and I was your guide ; I was young in my twelfth year then : I saw, I was undone, ah how ! . . .—VIRGIL : *Ecl.* viii, 37.
- (2) I cannot rightly tell how I entered it.—*Inferno*, c. i.
- 11 Our way of life and dwelling places are still always the same, and no new pleasure forges itself as we live on.—LUCRETIVS : B. iii, 1078.

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- 17 (1) *Winter's Tale*, Act i, sc. 2.  
 (2) If I interweave truth with ornament, if in some part I grace my pages with other charms than thine.—T. TASSO : *Gierusalemme*, Cl. i, st. 2.
- 23 RUSKIN, *Notes on the Turner Gallery*.
- 26 The Presence of the Gods becomes visible and their tranquil dwelling-places : the winds cannot shake, or the mists encloud them ; the hoary snow, gathering beneath the energy of frost, forces no entrance nor can rest there ; cloudless aether ever surrounds, and smiles on them in floods of immeasurable radiance.—LUCRETIVS : B. iii, 18.
- 28 If such glory has any real weight.—VIRGIL : *Aeneid*, B. vii, 4.
- 30 (1) Lavinia my bride is thine.  
 (2) Lycoris, here are fresh springs, here are trees and deep meadows ; here I could consume an eternity on love and thee.—VIRGIL : *Ecl.* x, 42.
- 33 (1) The spirit of Youth.  
 (2) As a translation, I shall quote a fragment from André Chénier ;  
       Et les baisers secrets et les lits clandestins.  
 The original is from MIMNERMUS : *Nanno*.
- 34 Her bearing, words, countenance, and dress.—PETRARCH : *Son.* cclxxii.
- 37 She hears men praise her and passes on veiled in the grace of modesty, and seems a Miracle sent earth from heaven.—*Vita Nuova* : *Son.* xiii.
- 38 Dante has told this vision twice : the translation in the text is adapted from both versions.  
       Pareami vedere il sole oscurare sì che le stelle si mostravano d'un colore che mi faceva giudicare che piangessero : e parevami che gli uccelli volando cadessero morti, e che fossero grandissimi terremoti. . . .  
       Ed uom m'apparve scolorito e fioco  
       Dicendomi : che fai ? non sai novella ?  
       Morta è la donna tua, ch' era sì bella.
- 42 *Lyra Apostolica*, p. 88.
- 43 . . as the wise of old said . . .  
       —διακειμένοις οὕτω περιέσεσθαι Τιμῶν [Φιλίσσιος] φησὶ πρῶτον  
       ὡς ἀφασίαν, ἔπειτα δ' ἀταξίαν.  
       PRELLER : *Hist. of Philos.* § 347, ed. 1838.

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44 (1) *Vaudracour and Julia.*(2) KEBLE: *Christian Year.*52 Von Suleika zu Suleika  
Ist mein Kommen und mein Gehn.*West-östlicher Divan*, Buch Suleika.

58 . . . herald ' . . .

'Αἰῶν ἀεροφόταν  
ἀστέρα . . . ἀέλου λευκοπτέρυγα πρόδρομον.

ION OF CHIOS.

60 BUNYAN: *Grace Abounding.*63 A. TENNYSON: *In Memoriam.*

66 Like Dante . . . .

—vidimi translato

Sol con mia donna a più alta salute.  
Ben m' accors' io, ch' i' era più levato,  
Per l'affocato riso della stella,  
Che mi pareva più roggio, che l' usato.*Paradiso*, c. xiv.67 (1) I miei pensier nel cuor vostro si fanno,  
Nel vostro spirto son le mie parole.MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI, *Rime.*(2) The perfect life of love and of peace.—*Paradiso*, c. xxvii.68 (1) Master of those that know.—*Inferno*, c. iv.

(2) . . accompany it'.

ἔοικεν ἡ μεγαλοψυχία οἷον κόσμος τις εἶναι τῶν ἀρετῶν· μείζους  
γὰρ αὐτὰς ποιεῖ, καὶ οὐ γίνεται ἀνευ ἐκείνων.—ARISTOTLE:  
*N. Ethics*, B. iv, c. 7.

69 . . as Aristotle observes . . .

μεγαλοψύχου . . . ὑπηρετεῖν προθύμως, καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἐν  
ἀξιώματι μέγαν εἶναι, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς μέσους μέτριον.—*N. Ethics*,  
B. iv, c. 8.70 ' . At her side to share the sweet voice and the delightful  
smile . . . —SAPPHO, *Ode II.*71 (1) The pearls and the garlands and the gay dresses, smile  
and song and sweet human voices.—PETRARCH: *Son.* ccxi.(2) . . countenances'.—Sir T. BROWNE: *Religio Medici.*(3) DONNE: *A Funeral Elegy.*

72 The small short words one cannot say without smiling.

*Paradiso*, c. i.



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- 73 . . . the Spanish motto.—*Now and Ever*.
- 74 AESCHYLUS : *Agamemnon*, l. 251, Ed. Dind.
- 77 To burn what I had worshipped, to worship what I had once  
burned.
- 80 —books, we know,  
Are a substantial world . . .  
WORDSWORTH : *Personal Talk*, Son. III.
- 81 *Studies pass into habits*.
- 82 ' Delian diver ' : see DIOGENES LAERT. ix, i.  
' Ionian Muses ' : see PRELLER, § 37.
- 91 (1) . . . the passionate poet . . .  
Nam cum suspicimus magni caelestia mundi  
templâ, super stellisque micantibus aethera fixum, etc.  
LUCRETIUS, B v, 1202-15.
- (2) I am terrified by the eternal silence of these infinite  
spaces.
- 92 (1) All earthly things are true in part, false in part. . . . All  
their principles are true, sceptics, stoics, atheists : But  
their conclusions are false, because the contradictory  
principles are true also. . . . Those reasons which from  
afar seemed to bound our horizon, when we have reached  
it, bound no longer : we begin to look beyond them.
- (2) It is frightful, to feel all that we hold securest crumble  
away.
- (3) Seeing too much for Scepticism and too little for Faith.
- (4) 'Tis a wise ignorance which knows itself.
- The quotations in the text will be found respectively on pp.224,  
vol.I: 97,II: 92,II: 215,I: 80,II: 118,II: 181,I, of Faugère's  
complete edition (1844). I give the references, because  
these passages by Roman Catholic editors have been (since  
1848) so transposed and mutilated (when not omitted alto-  
gether), that they assume a meaning diametrically opposite  
to the author's intention. This ingenuity is no doubt pro-  
fitable to the cause which it is intended to serve, but  
Englishmen may venture to question whether it be  
perfectly just to Pascal.
- 93 SHELLEY : *Defence of Poetry*.
- 95 The quotations in the text are from CARLYLE's *Miscellanies*,  
Vol. I, *Burns* : from *Sartor Resartus*, B. II, c. 9 ; and from  
the *French Revolution*, Vol. I, c. 2.
- 98 —one of the most competent of observers.  
M. D. HILL : *Causes of Crime*, 1857.

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100 Sonnet LXVI.

101 WORDSWORTH : *The Russian Fugitive*.

102 . . . Plato's graceful words,

Ὁ νοῦν ἔχων γεωργός . . . σπουδῇ δὲν θέρουσ ἐς Ἀδώνιδος.  
 κήπους ἀρῶν χαίροι θεωρῶν καλοῦς ἐν ἡμέραισιν ὀκτῶ γιγνομένους. . . ;  
*Phaedrus*, c. lxi.

103 (1) . . . more surely than Laura's.

Lei non trov' io, ma suoi santi vestigi  
 Tutti rivolti alla superna strada  
 Veggio, lunge da' laghi averni e stigi.

PETRARCH : *Son.* cclxv.

(2) . . . ' the Hours rich in blossoms '.

Ὦραι πολύνανθεμοι.

PINDAR : *Ol.* xiii.105 GOETHE : *Elegie*.

106 The more we love, the less we trust the return we may have  
 awakened : It is perhaps a thing natural in deep and true  
 affection to shrink from a decisive moment, however  
 longed for, and to tremble even whilst hope passes into  
 happiness.—MADAME DE STAEL : *Corinne*.

110 . . . work of a poet's loom.

CATULLUS : *Epithalamium Pelei et Thetidos*.112 . . . Tacitus has spoken of it . . . —*Hist.* iv, c. 77.

114 Sappho's phrase,

More golden than gold.

121 . . . like the saint . . .

Vade, inquit, a me, ita vivas ; fieri non potest, ut filius  
 istarum lacrimarum pereat.—AUGUSTINE : *Confessions*,  
 l. iii, c. 12.

123 A. TENNYSON : *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*.

125 (1) —with one who came nearest . . .

MILTON : *On Shakspeare*, 1630.

' (2) Then was it as though the Heavens lightened ; it seemed  
 as if I had lost nothing, nothing : as if I had everything,  
 which I had ever enjoyed.—GOETHE : *Sonnets*.

128 BUNYAN : *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

129 The soft disdain and soft repulses.

T. TASSO : *Aminta*, Att. v.

130 . . . the disheartened poet . . .

*Childe Harold*, c. iv, St. 123.

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- 132 —the poet's phrase . . .  
H. HEINE : *Neuer Frühling*, xxxvii.
- 133 *We must live whilst we live.*
- 140 SHELLEY : *The Recollection.*
- 143 (1) For such a smile was glowing in her eyes, that with mine  
I thought I touched the deepest depth of grace and of  
Paradise.—*Paradiso*, c. xv.  
(2) Like doves that hear the call of passion.—*Inferno*, c. v.
- 151 *Confessions*, B. iv, c. 8.
- 154 (1) Like the desolate Phaedra . . .  
V. EURIPIDES : *Hippolytus*, 198, &c.  
(2) . . . summer'.  
Nare per aestatem liquidam.  
VIRGIL : *Geor.* iv, 59.  
(3) . . . that something . . .  
ὅ τι τοῦ ζῆν φίλτερον ἄλλο  
σκότος ἀμπίσχω κρύπτει νεφέλαις.  
*Hippolytus*, l. 192, 3. Ed. Dind.
- 156 . . . a great poet.—II. HEINE : *Reisebilder.*
- 157 (1) MACHIAVELLI : *Principe*, cap. xxxvii.  
(2) Ah ! if there be none who hears me with pity,  
why waste such frequent prayers on heaven ?  
PETRARCH : *Canz.* xvii.
- 158 Soon she spread far and wide that great secret of sadness,  
which she loves to utter to the ancient oaks and shores.  
CHATEAUBRIAND : *Atala.*
- 160 MME DE STAEL : *Corinne.*
- 161 the feeble *you are not alone in misfortune.*  
Consolatio usitata Non tibi hoc soli . . . non firmissima.—  
CICERO : *Tusc. Disp.*
- 162 A. TENNYSON : *In Memoriam.*
- 163 —smile of welcome.—*Paradiso*, c. vii.
- 164 (1) *do manus*, ' I submit'.  
(2) . . . forgetfulness'. Iethaei ad fluminis undam  
securus latices et longa oblivia potant.  
*Aeneid*, B. vi, c. 714.
- 166 We must seek consolation in sorrow, not in ourselves, not in  
other men, not in anything created ; but in God. And  
the reason of this is that no creature can be the first cause

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of the events which we name evils : but that, as God's providence is their only and genuine cause, judge, and disposer, we must without question go straight to the source and ascend to the originator, if we would obtain real alleviation.

*Pensées*, Vol. i, p. 18.

169 BYRON : *Hebrew Melodies*.

171 (1) overcome by the eternal wound.—LUCRETIUS : i, 34.

(2) Live, then : of this passion no power can deprive thee.

BOCCACCIO : *L'Amorosa Fiammetta*, Epilogue.

175 . . obstinately strong'.—*Troilus and Cressida*, Act v, Sc. ii.

177 MACAULAY : *Essay on Machiavelli*.

179 If you have no care to learn the truth, here is enough to sanction quiet. But if with all your heart you would learn it, it is not enough, look closer ; it would be enough for a speculative question, but here, where all is at stake . . . And yet, after a transient reflection of this sort, people will take their pleasure, &c.—PASCAL : *Pensées*, Vol. ii, p. 147.

180 *Julian and Maddalo*.

183 (1) That she would tell everything or nothing.

*Pensées*, Vol. ii, p. 118.

(2) . . of Life'.—*Measure for Measure*, Act iii, sc. 1.

(3) . . Surveying my portion in a life that is no life.

EMPEDOCLES : Preller, § 169.

187 H. HEINE.

190 As he, who with panting breath has escaped from the deep sea to the shore, turns to the dangerous water and gazes.

*Inferno*, i (Carlyle's translation).

191 (1) Soverchio di dolcezza.—*Vita Nuova*.

(2) But thou lingerest : the day is going : young bride, come forth.—CATULLUS : *In nuptias Juliae et Manlii*.

192 . . Vision.—DE QUINCEY : *Confessions of an Opium Eater*.

195 (1) . . Quella man già tanto desiata  
A me parlando e sospirando porse ;  
Ond' eterna dolcezza al cor m'è nata.

PETRARCH : *Trionfo della Morte*, c. ii.

(2) . . A holy-hearted Poet'.—KEBLE : *Christian Year*.

196 SHELLEY : *Adonais*.

201 What are these words ? or where am I ? and what deceives me except I myself and paramount passion ?

PETRARCH : *Canz.* xvii.

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203 A. TENNYSON : *Maud*.

204 So thou wast then received into Paradise, as if worthy of the ever-blessed life : no wish remained, no hope, no desire ; here was the goal of thy deepest aim ; the source of regretful tears was dried up at once before the vision of that only Fairest.—GOETHE : *Elegie*.

No reader can be more conscious than I of the utter inadequacy of this or of translations in general. It is given solely in obedience to the commonsense rule that in an English book the knowledge of no other language should be anywhere required. But I am unable to follow this rule for the lines quoted on page 234. Heine is even more beyond translation than Goethe.

206 I did not weep, so stony I grew within.—*Inferno*, c. xxxiii.

214 ' the playthings of Providence '.

ἄνθρωπος . . . θεοῦ τι παίγνιον.

PLATO : *Laws*, B. vii.

216 Ah were it only for a moment, how gladly would I feel hope again ! but it is over, the desert hears no prayer, the drop is dried like the river, and the happiness of one day is as much beyond control as the destiny of a lifetime.—*Corinne*.

221 on Duty'.—CICERO : *De Officiis*.222 Like the generation of the leaves.—*Iliad*, vi, 146.224 SHAKSPEARE : *Venus and Adonis*.

228 Like a good and faithful servant of Christ, dispose thyself to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord.

232 Exiit ad coelum ramis felicibus arbos.—*Geor.* ii, 81.

*Felix* has, however, here a further more specific horticultural sense, not amenable to the purpose of the quotation.

237 A. TENNYSON : *Vision of Fair Women*.242 . . . *The Two Voices*.

245 (1) —is inestimable'.

μή φῶναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾶ λόγον.

SOPHOCLES : *Oedipus at Colonus*, l. 1225.

(2) A. TENNYSON : *In Memoriam*.

247 Without prescience of death and ready to leave the light.

SOPHOCLES : *Electra*, 1078.

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